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[PAULINE INVOLUNTARILY EXCLAIMED ALOUD, "MRS. LORAINNE!"]

CINDERELLA.

CHAPTER XX.

Mrs. LORAINNE's story was brought to an end by Calais pier and the fuss of disembarking and getting into the train awaiting them.

Lady Curzon travelled in a compartment for ladies only all the way to Paris, with Sophy for her only companion.

Doubtless, Sophy wondered at the long *little* she had had with her escort coming across. However, he left his charge now to herself to rest and to try to sleep, and she did not see him again till they reached Paris late in the evening.

She did not avail herself of his good intention. She could not rest nor sleep, being too much taken up with his amazing story to think over much of her own affairs.

She had an indifferent husband, who was wearied of her, and at no pains to conceal the fact.

Appearances were, indeed, deceitful when in Sir Philip she fondly believed she had

found a Prince among men! And Mr. Lorainne—unimpressible, cool Mr. Lorainne—had been a wild young cavalry officer, a ruined, desperate, starving man, and was married to a woman who was the greatest heiress in England, and as much stranger to him as she was to Pauline herself.

About six o'clock in the evening they drove up to the Princess's splendid hotel in the Faubourg St. Germain, and were in time.

The old lady had rallied and was expecting her, and she hurried to her room without losing a minute.

Her aunt was propped up in bed in a sitting posture by means of many pillows, her toilet made, her white hair curled carefully, an exquisite lace cap on her head, her skeleton fingers half-covered with rings—in fact, one here beheld the ruling passion (dress) strong in death.

"I'm glad you've come, Pauline," she said, feebly. "I suppose you scarcely expected to find me here still? The doctor gave me up weeks ago, but I knew he was wrong; still," with a regretful sigh, "it can't be long now."

"You don't look very ill, aunt, and I hope you are really getting better," said Pauline, taking her hand, and trying to be cheerful.

"No, no, no! I'll never be better! I've had my day. I've lived my life. I've done some good and some harm in my time, and now my reign is over. Did your husband come with you, Pauline?"

"No; he was very busy. He sent his secretary," she replied, with some embarrassment.

"Sent his secretary! Folly, wicked madness! Travelling with a young woman like you! Ah, I hear you are a fashionable couple—you and Sir Philip. If I had known what he was—how weak, how unstable—he should never have married you, Pauline, never!"

Here she was interrupted by a violent fit of coughing that nearly shook her to pieces, and, after a pause, she continued,—

"What he can see in La Bert, a red-haired, domineering, green eyed, elderly woman, no one can tell," shrugging her shoulders contemptuously. "It would serve him right if you were to turn the tables on him, and make

him jealous. You are years younger than him; you are handsome, though you have lost some of your looks. It would serve him right."

"Aunt!" she expostulated, indignantly, "what are you saying?"

"Well, of course, I know you won't! You are like your mother; but I would. Nay, well, perhaps, we had better not be raking up the past; but I had a bad husband, and at first I wept, and wailed, and fretted, and made myself very miserable and hideous in consequence. To do that is utterly foolish. I soon left off fighting with fate. I found distractions, and I threw my whole soul into politics—the politics of my country. Pauline, you know that I am a Russian. My love for my country was and is everything. Aye!" fiercely, "of crimes to free her I would sell my soul! I kept you from me, because I thought as your mother's daughter you would not attend to such matters. You would put live and self first; but I was wrong. You are one of us; you are like me; like your aunt Nathalie you belong to the cause. You are a member of the Hand of Justice. Bodisco told me so only last week. I could not believe it; but he swears it is true. Is it not?"

"It is," she answered, faintly.

"My child, I rejoice. I leave you in my place. You have no ties, no children. You shall have unlimited wealth—all I possess. Use it well, use it for the cause, the struggle for liberty. Were you to see the ignorance, the ground down, pressing, gnawing poverty, the very death in life of the masses, you, my enthusiastic Pauline, would throw yourself into it heart and soul, as your grandfather did who died in the mines; as your uncle Ivan did, who died on the scaffold; as your aunt Nathalie does, who is dragging out her existence still, but never grudging the penalty, in convict gait in a village in Siberia."

"Then my aunt Nathalie is alive!" she exclaimed, in amazement.

"She is, poor soul! I try by every means to communicate with her, and sometimes I succeed. She was alive last year. She was devoted to the cause; she, a millionaire's daughter, toiled in the fields as a common woman in order to spread the great truth among others of that class. She gave up love, wealth, youth—everything for the one aim of her life, her people's freedom. She had many enemies, but at last she was taken, and met with no mercy. Siberia for life!"

"How—how was she taken?" asked her niece.

"She was a companion on a secret printing press, she and two or three others. My day they attended Imperial News, hunting parties, sleighing parties; by night, disguised in the very coarsest garments, they stole forth to an attic in a low quarter of the city, and worked till dawn. They were all taken through treachery red-handed in the very act; their doom Siberia or the mines, which latter mean death. She was spared that. She is a servant in a humble family, and alive; but her father was sent to the lead mines, and lived but a few months. Here she stopped for breath."

"Your mother was averse to all our schemes. She would have no hand or part in them. She was disowned by her father and by me, and she ran away to Paris, and found shelter and a rich English husband. Again a pause."

"I will give you a list of names of great people here who are friendly to the cause. You will at once take my place. I leave you this hotel, and you will find many friends, not merely political, but others. Their names are all in a book I shall give you. Use every power to release your aunt Nathalie, your nearest of kin."

"It has been the dream of my old age, but, alas! I have died, or as good as died, without seeing it fulfilled. Will you promise me this, Pauline?"

"Certainly I will," she returned, taking her

hand. "I will do all in my power. I will leave no stone unturned. I will compass her release, if such a thing can be; but I have no reliance on Count Bodisco. Somehow, he repels me. Who is he?"

"My dear, there you are like your mother. She had an inveterate hatred of him. She would not marry him, not though I went down on my knees to her to accept him for the good of the cause. He is clever, he is far-seeing, he holds many threads in his hands, he has great power, great influence. I do not"—hesitating, and looking at Pauline keenly—"say trust him, but pretend to trust him. It will be for your best advantage, and the good of the cause."

Here she lay back exhausted on her pillow, and coughed, and gasped for breath.

"I'm glad you came in time, for there is much you should know," she proceeded, in a weaker voice. "All my private papers are in that large black desk; the keys are under my head. Also of my jewel-case. You can take them all afterwards. My servants are all of us, and all to be trusted."

"There is a little black desk that was your mother's; a countrywoman gave it to my agents. The letters are of no use, but you may like to have it."

"Poor Pauline! She was a good girl, but emotional and foolish. Never let the heart get the better of the head, Pauline. Don't let this mad-headed adventures keep you from your own home. You will find your husband useful. He is in high favour with the great in office; better still, he is in their confidence. His private papers will be of importance to the cause."

These were positively her last words. She fell back on the pillows exhausted, panting for breath, and never spoke again. An hour later she breathed her last.

The unwonted emotion and excitement had hastened her end. With her hand in Pauline's, her little keen eyes still bright, and imperatively on her, as though she would remind her of a promise, she knew what her aunt would say, though she could not speak.

"I know what you would say," she exclaimed, "know perfectly. You would remind me of my aunt Nathalie. I solemnly swear to you that I shall not forget her."

A squeeze of her hand showed that Pauline had been right in her surmise, and, closing her eyes, the old Princess conspirator never opened them again, but passed away, as it were, in her sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

PAULINE could not pretend to be very sorry for her aunt; she had seen so little of her, she had come and gone in meteoric flashes. But the death even of an aged person to whom one is almost a stranger makes one grave and thoughtful, as Death always does when he enters our dwellings.

Pauline had a great deal to do—interviews with friends of her late aunt with regard to the funeral, letters to read, letters to be answered, papers to burn, packets of which were labelled in her old-fashioned Italian hand, "to be burnt at once after I am dead."

Lady Curzon was not surprised, and certainly not pleased, to receive a visit from Count De Bodisco. He was very deferential, most courteous, most desirous to please. Why did she dislike him so unaccountably and so intensely? He was a fraud in one way, and she resented it, though she knew it was foolish. His appearance was so deceitful; he looked, at the first glance, meek and amiable and young, but in truth he was bordering on fifty. He had very fair hair, which showed no grey streaks; he wore a small fair moustache, and shaven face; his fair skin, with but few lines, and his light eyes, completed the illusion. His eyes looked mild and innocent and smiling, but they could be piercing and hard and cruel; his whole expression both threatening and relentless.

She had received him in her aunt's boudoir,

and the day after her death he came (as people do abroad) in the evening, after dinner, in his evening dress, and found her sitting alone.

Having delivered a long eulogium on the late Princess—her power, her fascination, her talents, her wealth—he said—

"And now we look to you, Countess Pauline, to take up her mantle, and continue her good work for her cause."

"I cannot," she replied, firmly; "not in the sense she worked. I know nothing of politics, I am not clever, I do not understand your aim. Besides, I am English—not Russian."

"It requires but little effort to understand how you can do mighty good to millions—I say millions of your fellow-creatures—now ground down under the heel of a tyranny that wrings their very souls, that keeps them steeped in darkest ignorance, and that robs them of all their earnings save what suffices to keep them alive to work and earn more. More than this," he proceeded, in a long, quick, monotonous tone; "your aunt left you her enormous fortune as a trust—not for your self alone. You know this. It was my influence that prevailed in the matter. I told her you were one of us in name, and soon would be one of us in heart and soul."

She opened her lips to repudiate this statement, but she dared not utter a word—his blue light eyes threatened Pauline—and dared her to speak and renounce his claims.

"You have an empty life, and you have means at your hands of filling it—besides, and above all, you have to compass the release of your relative, Nathalie Dornanoff. It is your duty—at least you can see that."

This certainly did appeal to her. Here she could throw herself into the undulating heart and soul, and discussed her aunt's chances of escape very eagerly. Her pretensions, her endurance, her business, were painted in her in glowing terms by the Count, who was a wonderfully clever man and able speaker, and knew well how to play on the emotions of the human heart, especially those of an impressionable young woman.

Small wonder that her slow, half-terrible feelings were aroused. This heroine—the noble, devoted, persecuted woman was her own nearest of kin, her mother's only sister. She was resolved to put forth every nerve to save her—and spend her money, if need be, like water. And when she saw it to expedite her life to the cause she might very well venture to embark her money for its benefit. It could not be possible that her aunt, uncle, grandfather, and great-aunt had all been the victims of a foolish chimera. She went to her secretary and wrote a large cheque for Count De Bodisco on the spot. She was filled with sympathy, carried away by his vivid word-painting, was wrought up almost to enthusiasm, was talking to him eagerly, nay, excitedly for her, when the door opened, and Mr. Lorraine was announced.

He and the Count, being introduced, surveyed each other with mutual distrust, and the latter, after a few sentences, seeing that the latest arrival meant to stay and sit him out, bowed himself gracefully away, with a cheque for two thousand pounds in his pocket, and went downstairs with a bland countenance, and eyes peering out benignly through a narrow chink of eye lashes.

"How do you know that man?" said Mr. Lorraine, abruptly, as the door closed, and speaking with a curtness that was barely courteous.

"He is, or was, a friend of my aunt's," she replied, evasively.

"And what brought him here now, if I may be permitted to inquire?"

"Business," she returned, briefly.

"Ah! the less business you have with him I should say the better," returned Mr. Lorraine, quietly.

"Then you know him?"

"I did know him. He is said to be mixed up in some secret society; he would be a dangerous friend—promise me you will have nothing to do with him."

She could not promise this. Was not Bodisco the only link between her and her miserable aunt, tilling away in slavery? She shut her eyes very tightly together, and said nothing. Between her and her companion has now arisen a slight shadow—the shadow of Bodisco.

"I have told you so much," he said, reproachfully; "and you will tell me nothing. You are keeping me in the dark, like the rest of the world, and I would not complain if I did not believe that unconsciously you are drifting into some great danger. What is the link between you and Bodisco?"

"I cannot tell you," she replied, colouring faintly, in spite of herself.

"But there is one?" he exclaimed, in a tone of imperious interrogation.

"Yes, there is one," she rejoined, in a low voice, without raising her eyes.

"One unknown to your husband?" coming nearer as he spoke.

She bowed her head.

When he spoke again she knew by his voice that a complete ravulsion of feeling had been accomplished in a few minutes—he distrusted her. Did oh! could he think that she was like Madame Bert?

"Believe me," she cried, impulsively. "I would tell you if I could. It is not my secret. I dared tell you you would know it. It is secret concerning another woman between him and me. There, even now I have told you too much," she exclaimed, in much excitement. "Believe me that there is nothing but the good of another person involved in the secret, on my honour!"

"As far as you are concerned, I am sure there is not. But this fellow—this Bodisco—he is not fit to be your fellow-worker, not fit to have the confidence of—a young, an impulsive girl, I may say, like you, Lady Carzon; for you are nearly one-and-twenty, I believe."

"He might say the same of you," she answered, on the spur of the moment.

"He might, but you know better. I have not your confidence, as it happens. I wish I knew what you were going to do. I don't like having you alone in Paris among a set of political intriguers, immensely wealthy and friendless, and totally inexperienced, and in a kind of way absolutely rudderless. I wish you would return to England."

"No, at least I shall not see her here," she answered, fiercely.

"And would you thus leave her the field to herself?" he asked, bluntly; "and, after all, it is only an aggravated flirtation."

"I told you before that I would not return. Let us no longer harp on the subject. When you go back I shall give you a note for Philip. When do you go back?"

"To-morrow if I can no longer be of service to you; by the morning mail, if I can, I mean," correcting himself. "If Philip comes and fetches you, will you return?"

"Yes," she answered. "I may safely promise you that, but he never will; and the best happiness I can know," she added, bitterly, "lies apart from him."

"And now, to change the subject," said Mr. Lorraine, taking no notice of her last remark. "I have had an odd adventure. It was strange that I should have been talking to you so much about my—my wife. I am nearly sure I saw her in the street this afternoon."

"You saw her? How? Where?" she cried, eagerly. "How extraordinary?"

"I was passing a close carriage, drawn up outside the Church of St. Roch, and I heard a faint exclamation, and looking into her carriage I caught a glimpse of a face—a girl's face. Our eyes met. I recognised her, and I shuddered; but before I had time to decide what to do the carriage was almost out of sight."

"And, anyway, you could not have spoken to her?" remarked Lady Carzon. "It is in the hand. What would identify her as posing you had to wear to her appearance?"

"Not her face; there might be two such faces," he replied; "but her hands. She has very small, beautiful hands."

"So have heaps of other women," she replied, thinking complacently of her own, which were unusually small and delicate.

"Yes, but heaps of other women have not a large scar running right across the back of the left hand. I could swear to that hand and scar among thousands."

"And how did she look?" she asked.

"Very pale, very ill, I should say, and it almost seemed that she waited to speak to me, but I only had a momentary view, and she was gone. I could not trace her. The carriage quickly turned a corner and was lost among a number of others—a dark coupé and pair of black horses. They appeared to be in black, and someone in the carriage was in black also."

"Man or woman?" inquired Pauline, curiously.

"That I could not discover. And now," rising as he spoke, looking at the clock, "I must be going. We shall not meet again for probably a long time, unless you change your mind and come back to England."

"I shall stay here, at any rate, for some time, and if I find out anything about your mysterious wife I shall let you know. I cannot get your story out of my head. I wonder—I wonder very much what will be the end of it?" she said, surveying him gravely.

"What would you expect?" he asked, in a strange, dull tone. "There can be no end to it, as you call it, but with the end of our lives. A few words have bound us in chains we must carry to our dying day. Our paths lie in opposite directions. And now once more good-bye. If ever you want a friend, if ever you are in trouble or difficulty, rely on me. Good-bye."

He did not hold out his hand, he did not wait for any reply; the door was closed, he was gone, and Pauline was alone.

For fully two months Lady Carzon stayed in Paris, and found plenty to occupy her and her time.

She was very rich, she was Princess Dornanoff's heiress and niece, and lived in a splendid hotel, wore Russian sables all but priceless, drove magnificent black Orloff horses, had many friends and countless acquaintances, who were too well bred to inquire about the husband she had left behind her in foggy England. Their peculiar domestic arrangements were put down to "English eccentricity," and she was accepted for what she was—a very rich, handsome, well-born young woman, not given to men's society, herding principally with older married ladies of her own set, indifferent to compliments, to admiration, and consequently well received by those who were not indifferent to both among her own sex.

She was thought a prude, and "a stupid Englishwoman" by some men, but their opinion was a matter of sublime indifference to her, and in spite of it, at all receptions she was invariably surrounded by a circle two or three deep for whatever else she was. Her diamonds were unique, and she was both handsome and mysterious, consequently interesting. She was always looking out for Mrs. Lorraine, and always disappointed. She had made veiled secret inquiries about "a delicate, rich, young Englishwoman," and could not hear of anyone answering the description.

She went to High Mass at La Madeleine and St. Roch, and looked carefully among all the worshippers in vain. She wrote to her husband cool little letters. If he wanted her to return he must come for her. She did not actually say so, but he perfectly understood the situation, and comprehended that from her vantage ground in Paris the owner of hundreds of estates in Russia, of diamonds, and money and houses and horses, the once penniless Cinderella could make her own terms. He informed her casually in one of his letters that he and Lorraine had parted. They had had a dispute. "Lorraine had lost his temper and said many ungracious things." But what the dispute was about or who was not revealed

to Pauline, and was left to the suggestions of her fertile imagination. Her imagination suggested many things, among others this solution, "Could the dispute have been about her?"

CHAPTER XXII.

PAULINE spent large sums on "the cause," sums that went through Count de Bodisco's supple, fallow fingers with alarming rapidity. He was the only one of the members of the society with whom she had any direct dealings.

One or two ladies had talked to her in a very enthusiastic and impassioned way, and praised her liberality, but the only thing that stirred her feelings was the thought of her Aunt Nathalie; and thus time went on.

She gave herself up more and more to society, and began to be carried away on its current, to find that flattery, when delicately administered, was not unpalatable, to take an interest in her splendid toilettes like her friends, to find a pleasant thrill when she saw many faces turned towards her as she gracefully entered a salon.

Once, and only once, as her handsome dark eyes looked indolently round, to her great surprise she beheld Mr. Lorraine. It was at a grand reception at the President's—he was with another gentleman, who had evidently attracted his attention to Lady Carzon; he turned, probably not prepared to see her brilliantly dressed, blazing with diamonds, animated, and surrounded by quite a little crowd.

He did not advance, nor join the circle; he merely bowed in answer to her smiling acknowledgment, and gave her a glance in return for her smile, which simply consisted of cool disapproval.

She was deeply hurt though she did not show it, and turned her head indifferently away. As she turned she discovered that Count Bodisco was standing like a funkey behind her chair; perhaps this may have accounted for Mr. Lorraine's reluctance to approach, but, all the same, she was extremely angry with her countryman.

Some time afterwards she heard that her husband was dangerously ill of small-pox, and alone in the charge of a hired nurse. All his friends, even Madame Bert, and his sister, had forsaken him. She felt that, in spite of all, that it was her plain duty now to go to him and nurse him, and she did.

She told none of her circle of her dire intention. What an outcry there would have been! but she left Paris with the least possible delay by the evening express. She did not even take Sophy, having no right to put her in the way of infection, and she went alone, with a small supply of luggage, and took her seat in a first-class carriage, for ladies only. One lady occupied it, a lady who sat with her back to the engine and her veil down, a still, composed figure. This started without adding to that number, and it was an express train, not stopping till it reached Boulogne.

Pauline never slept in a train, and presently drew out a book, and attempted to read, as well as the jolting and swaying of the carriage would permit.

After awhile she happened to glance up, attracted by a slight movement on the part of her quiet companion. She was no longer sitting as rigid as a stuffed figure; she was searching for something, a scent-bottle, which she applied, tremblingly, to her nostrils. She also noticed that she had removed her gloves, and felt a strange thrill run through her veins as she observed a deep diagonal scar across the back of her left hand, and, unknowing what she did, she involuntarily exclaimed aloud,—

"Mrs. Lorraine?"

She had not meant to address her, it was a mere interjection. But she heard her, and said, in a low voice, as if she brought forth each word with an effort,—

"I scarcely know myself by that name, madame, but it is mine," lifting her veil and

scrutinising her companion, earnestly, as she spoke.

What a face was revealed! Chiselled features like marble, but wasted and sunken; faded, haggard eyes, a face upon which the hand of death had set his seal.

"Pray, how do you know me?" she asked, bending forward, and gazing with an intensity that frightened her into Pauline's eyes.

"I—I know Mr. Lorraine," she stammered; "he confided his story to me. I am sorry for him, for you, for your cruel position, so false to both, and often wished I could meet you, and endeavour to bring you to know one another."

"But, how—how did you recognise me?" she demanded, persistently. "He only saw me once, you never saw me before," she said, with a chill, contemptuous glance, that froze her *vis-à-vis*.

"By that," pointing to her hand; "he described a most singular scar."

"He was more observant than he seemed. Tell me where he is now?" she asked, looking at the other, curiously.

"I wish I could, but I don't know."

"It was hard on him," she continued, in an even tone, "but there was no other way. Thornton said he looked a desperate man, ready for any emergency, and yet a man that could be trusted. He certainly saved me," shuddering, "from a fate worse than death—marriage with a drunken profligate, whom I loathed. It seemed a strange, mad ceremony, but it was the outcome of stern necessity. By my father's will I was bound to marry my cousin. I had no option, but my marriage certificate and wedding-ring proved a shield that even he dared not put aside!"

She spoke very quietly, in a tone as chill and frozen as an arctic wind.

"It may have been all very satisfactory on your side, Mrs. Lorraine, but I am looking at the matter from Mr. Lorraine's point of view. Do you know that you have cost him a fortune," demanded Pauline, indignantly.

"No, but I was grieved to find that he declined to touch the thousand pounds," in a voice that was as clear and cold as steel.

"I honour him for it," she exclaimed, passionately, "he gave up his freedom under false pretences, but he would not take money for it. His wealthy uncle is always pressing him to marry—to marry. He is his only relative, the last of his name; and when he brings home his bride he is to be his uncle's heir, not otherwise. How can he ever bring home a bride, now?" she asked, rather defiantly.

"Nevertheless, he will," returned the other, calmly. "Can't you see that I shall release him before long? I have been a great invalid. I have been given over often. I have an incurable heart complaint. My days are numbered. I am glad, and sorry—sorry to leave the peaceful cloister—sorry because the bulk of my money, which goes now to religious orders, and has done a vast amount of good in pious hands, must go to my heir, Benjamin Thornton, who will squander it in wickedness and every kind of ill living!"—her white, thin face became austere and stern at the very idea.

Pauline could see that she had before her a woman, who was a nun in all but name, who would sacrifice everything she possessed for her religion, who would offer up to her sense of duty home, money, love, youth, friends and life. Just as by all accounts Pauline's Aunt Nathalie had let everything go by the board for the sake of patriotism and for the cause.

"You will tell him that you met me," she said, slowly, and in token of having met me, give him this,"—a large signet ring she had drawn off her finger. "He will perhaps recognize it, and assure him that I am sorry for all he has suffered for me, and that it will not now be for long. In fact, I am on my way to a convent near Calais to take leave of a venerable relation who cannot come to me, and something tells me that my days are numbered. The slightest shock, the least excitement—"

The words were hardly out of her lips when there was a sudden crash. Flying full speed

through a station they came against the end of some waggons not sufficiently shunted. The train was not thrown off the line, but they were all very much shaken—handles twisted off the doors, and their agony of apprehension the same as if they had been in a serious accident. Pauline's opposite neighbour became livid, then of a leaden hue. She gasped, pointed to her bag, with frantic gestures. Pauline tore it open, and seizing a little bottle she indicated, hastily poured some of it into a flask and held it to her lips. She moistened them with an effort, and then sank back and pulled her veil down once more over her face. Pauline asked her if she could not be of some further assistance, but she merely shook her head; evidently speech was difficult to her, and she did not worry her with questions nor fuss, and after a little quietly resumed her book, more for a cloak to her thoughts than anything else. How extraordinary that she (who alone knew of her existence among all Mr. Lorraine's friends) should so strangely come across his mysterious wife. She had but little thought of him, and all human emotions were probably thrust out of her heart as wicked intrusions. Among her own people, doubtless, she was looked upon as a saint, and probably she was a most devout and excellent young woman, but she felt instinctively somehow that she should never "get in with her."

She had a firmness and resolution about her mouth that frightened Pauline. Probably she could perform great and heroic deeds, but surely she could never smile. She had never been young. She had tramped down earthly love, and even earthly sympathies.

Pauline looked up at her furtively, and met her eyes through her veil surveying her sternly.

They did not look away or flinch. Her veil was a lace one with a very deep, thick border, which concealed her mouth and nose, but allowed the eyes to be seen—it was a kind of mask. Indeed, she believed it was the name for these veils.

Pauline looked away rather discomfited by her hard and unresponsive stare, and once more went back to her book, or, at any rate, to a semblance of reading, but she felt that all the time her eyes were fixed on her, and she could not help feeling constrained and uncomfortable, and again summoned up her courage to meet them bravely once more, and after a little delay she looked steadily at her again. But again, and as before, she met the same cold—nay, stony stare. She was resolved to face her without flinching, but she had given way. She had to look aside—there was really something so awful in her steady, silent gaze.

Impelled by an irresistible impulse she ventured to look once more. What did she see about her that her eyes should rest on her with such a steady, look lustre, rude gaze? They never turned aside, they never blenched—it was intolerable.

Pauline was resolved either to speak to her or move her seat. She looked at her rich, plain black dress, her black mantle, her little bonnet to correspond, and then once more she ventured to meet her eye, and said,—

"Mrs. Lorraine, are you better?" "Anything was better than this hideous silence. The sound of her own voice sounded strange and hollow, and startled herself as they thundered on through the dark, night-clouded country.

"Are you better?" she reiterated, in a louder tone.

No answer.

But what was that she saw, as she leant forward and stared hard at her companion among the folds of her cloak? Her hands were clenched. Or was her vision distorted? The very nails seemed driven into the flesh, as if in the last throes of mortal agony, as if wrung from direct anguish, when soul and body are parting.

Pauline could be brave. Better to know the worst, she thought, than imagine untold evils. She leant forward and touched one of her hands. It was rigid—it was ice. By a still

greater effort she raised her veil. Her pallor was intensified by the line of death, her eyes were fixed, her jaw had dropped. She was gazing into the face of a dead woman.

For a moment she was paralysed with horror, and felt as if she were turned into stone, but soon she experienced a reaction setting in. An ungovernable tremor shook her frame. She was alone with a corpse.

Not a decently laid-out corpse, my friends, with reverently folded hands, and straightened limbs, and closed eyes, but a dreadful dead body sitting up opposite to her in a bonnet and shawl, with horrible wide-open, glassy eyes.

She dared not shut them. How could she escape from them?—what were they looking at now? The other living eyes that had looked into her face not an hour ago. She rushed to the further end of the carriage, and covered her face with her hands, but it was no good. She seemed to see it all the same, and, impelled by some inward impulse, must look at it, and she did. She sat up transfixed with horror, and looked and looked again. A sudden violent oscillation of the carriage made it sway forward. Heavens! if it rose! She should go mad.

She remembered no more till she found herself lying on a sofa in the waiting-room at Boulogne, surrounded by a crowd of excited, eager faces, all asking questions at once, all burning with curiosity to know about "the other lady."

A doctor had relieved their minds. She had not murdered her. There was no sensational paragraph for the local paper, as far as Pauline was concerned. The corpse had died of a long-standing heart disease.

It was strange that in her state of health she had elected to travel alone, for she had two servants accompanying her in the train.

Lady Curzon hinted as much to her maid.

"Ah, madam!" she cried, "would you believe it, would you credit the reason! It was economy to save my first-class ticket."

She looked incredulous, and said nothing, but she had understood from Mr. Lorraine that he had been told that she was one of the greatest heiresses in England.

"It was not for herself she saved—it was for good works," proceeded her attendant, who was crying as she spoke. "Since she has known that her life was uncertain, and knowing that secret, she has been saving, and pinching, and putting by every penny. All her money except this goes away to her next heir—a bad, bad man—but still she will have bequeathed many, many thousand francs to good works. Madame Vernon was a good mistress, and a saint on earth. To think that she should have made such an end, without the last rites, alone in a railway carriage! But wherever she died she was prepared."

"Madame Vernon you call her?" said Pauline, in surprise.

"Sister Angelique was her name, too. She had another, I am aware, but never used it. She made a *mariage de convenance* with some stranger to keep her freedom and her fortune—a poor Englishman, who asked no questions. No one knows anything of him—(did they not?)—he was just a kind of lay figure called in from the street. He was given plenty of money to hold his tongue, and he has never troubled her in any way, nor never was seen, as far as I know."

There was an investigation at Boulogne, and Lady Curzon was detained there for two days, and then, rather shaken by her dreadful railway journey, took the boat and hastened on to London. She found Philip extremely ill. The doctor looked very grave indeed, and warned her seriously of infection and risks, and told her that the small-pox was of the virulent type, and had been raging in the lower parts of London; but she was resolved, and took her place and her turn in the sick-room at once, and proved herself a steady, careful, capable nurse. One day, by the doctor's orders, she went for a drive. She did not walk, for fear of carrying the infection; but once out

in the Park, away from any one, she alighted and took a turn—aloof and alone. The season was over—the place deserted—but a few pedestrians like herself. She discerned one solitary man coming towards her. She gave him a wide berth. On coming nearer she discovered that it was Mr. Loraine. How strange that they should meet thus!

"Do not come near me," she cried whilst yet afar off, putting up her hands with a gesture of dismissal, not entertaining the thought that perhaps he might avoid her as before.

"Why, why not? What on earth do you mean?" approaching in spite of her commands.

"Small-pox!" she answered. "Keep away."

"What!" he cried, turning as white as a sheet; "you don't mean to say that you are nursing him!"

"Am I not the fittest person to do it?" she asked, harking away and keeping herself as far off as possible; "who should nurse if I did not? My place is with him—now."

Her argument seemed to have but little effect on Mr. Loraine. He looked at her—he tried to speak—but failed to come quite close to her, and stood staring at her as if he could scarcely realise what he beheld.

"I have something to tell you," she went on, but do, please, keep away. What is the good of running risks for nothing? Listen. I have seen your wife!"

"You have!" he exclaimed incredulously, "and where?"

"We travelled together from Paris. She was very ill. I may as well tell you the truth at once," making a dash at the subject—"that she is dead—and you are free."

There was a moment's silence; then he said in a voice that, for all its resolute suppression, betrayed more than he desired, "How did you know that it was she?"

"By her hand—by her face—by her own lips, and by a token she gave me for you! I will give it to you I will tell you all about it another time," as the clang of a neighbouring clock warned her that she must be going.

"Where shall I find you? Where shall I meet you?" he demanded, hurrying towards her.

"I cannot tell you now—I don't know; but, in any case, write to Number 17, Rue Royale, Boulogne, and you will find that what I have told you is true—that Sister Angelique, Madame Vernon, or Mrs. Loraine as she was never called, died last week."

"Supposing that you should catch this horrible small-pox?" he said, now walking beside her, "what precautions have you taken? Who is to nurse you? Have you thought of that, and of the danger you run every hour of the day?"

"There is no fear of me," she responded resolutely. "If I had numbers of fond friends and relations, if my life was of great importance to anyone—which it is not—there might be some fear, but as nobody specially wants me I am quite safe. Moreover, I am not afraid of infection, and that in itself is a strong safeguard. Do not be the least uneasy about me. Good-bye," and with a hasty wave of her hand she turned away, and hurried to where her brougham was awaiting her, got in quickly, and drove off towards home. She looked out, glanced back as they trotted rapidly along, and saw Mr. Loraine standing exactly where she had left him, looking after her in an attitude of what—what did it convey?"

Expostulation, astonishment, indecision, regret.

(To be continued.)

A bird upon the wing may carry a seed that shall add a new species to the vegetable family of a continent; and just so a word, a thought, from a living soul, may have results immeasurable, eternal.

A LOVER AND HIS LASS.

CHAPTER XV.

It was easy enough to do. Gable End, built ages back, had originally its rooms upstairs communicating, as often seen in very ancient houses: that is, in nearly every case, each room had a large square roomy cupboard several feet square, through which one could pass to the next room, and so on; these cupboards being, in fact, almost a small anteroom, so large were they—roomy and dark, where one hung unused garments, wardrobes of the past, and odd lumber generally. These communicating doors were, of course, kept locked and bolted. Father's room was on Leila's side of the long corridor, and between the two chambers ran a broad, oblong curtained cupboard, in which was stowed away an old spinning-wheel, mother's easel she used to use, a few embroidery frames and other such odds-and-ends not now needed.

Here I intended to take up my standpoint; and concealed from any chance intruder into father's room, I could safely see myself and yet not be seen. The only thing was to get Leila to change rooms with me for the night, and that she could not refuse; besides, she could have no motive for desiring to do so.

I at once went off to find Leila, and ask her to go into my room for that night instead of her own. She agreed at once with alacrity, complimenting me upon what she termed my "splendid idea." I was obliged to tell her the reason in asking her to change, and begged her not to mention it even to aunt.

"Certainly not, as you don't wish it, Celia," she answered, earnestly. "I think you are going to do exactly the right thing; just what I should do were I in your place. It would be a great comfort to have it cleared up, wouldn't it?" she ended plaintively.

Then I went into her room to unlook and unbolt the door, which had been so seldom done that it creaked and groaned, and required some force to move the heavy bolts ere I got it opened. I next went along the few feet of dark space and tried the other door on father's side. This easily opened, for father used the cupboard to stow away cases in which bric-a-brac had arrived from abroad, and it was constantly opened and shut from his side by Prudence to give it a now-and-again dusting.

I opened the door to make sure it went smoothly, for I desired to make no noise at night, and just thrust my head round, saying:

"It's only I, father dear. I'm looking for something. Are you better?"

"I hope so, my child," he answered from the bed at the farther end of the room, but it did not sound very reassuringly in my watchful ears. Then I shut it to gently and passed through again into Leila's room. So far everything was ready for the fulfilment of my plan.

I kept in my room until dinner time, at six o'clock. Colin had come back and gone with Michael round to the stables to see a new carthorse which had been bought at Bury market a few days before. I heard him come in to dress, and go whistling softly to his room. I thought to myself, as I heard him, can one laugh, sing, be merry with an evil conscience? Is it possible to hide sin under a smile, clothe guilt with mirth? Perhaps—who can say?

I have never known Colin and Michael stay so long over their wine and smoke after dinner as they did that night. I thought they would never come back into the drawing-room, or was it my fancy that they remained longer than usual? I cannot tell, only I know I longed for them to come in. I wanted to feel Colin near me, to see his dear brown eyes looking into mine. I felt as if I were going to lose him, and must make the very most of him while still he stayed with me. It was a strange inexplicable fancy, that of mine, was it not?

He came and sat beside me on the sofa, where I sat trying to work.

"Busy, little Blue Eyes?" he said, caressingly, laying his hand on my shoulder; "never idle, always doing something. What are you making now?"

"A work-bag," I answered.

"Well, put down the work-bag, and tell me what you have been doing with yourself all the afternoon without me," he went on, smooching my cheek.

I glanced over at aunt and Leila sitting talking in the far corner of the drawing-room. Did they hear him, I wondered?

"I was reading," I returned, bending over my work.

"Reading or thinking of me? Come now, which was it, you dear little damozel?"

"Both," I said, quietly, and indeed I spoke but the truth.

"Do you know, Blue Eyes, I feel most awfully drowsy to-night," he begins, after a little time watching me putting my needle in and out attentively. "I feel as if I couldn't keep my eyes open, but that they would shut whether I wanted them to or not. I can't think what should make me so sleepy. I never feel sleepy after dinner, as a rule, and I've done no hard work to-day to make me so. I'm morally certain in five minutes you'll find I'm nodding."

True enough, in less than five minutes after he spoke he was nodding, more than nodding, nearly quite asleep.

"Colin," I said, gently, "you're going to sleep. Wake up;" and I touched his arm.

He started, raised his head quickly, and stared at me for a second vacantly, as if he was trying to recall his scattered senses. I noticed how bright and glassy his eyes looked—staringly bright, I thought.

"I beg your pardon, my Blue Eyes. What a lout I am. I wish I didn't feel so horribly sleepy; I shall be nodding again in a moment, I know."

Again he spoke truly. It was very curious, his dropping off to sleep like that. I never knew him do it before. He might have been keeping vigils for many nights past, and exhausted nature thus taking her revenge for continued wakefulness now.

"Colin, wake up!" I said again at his ear. He started just as before, and with a seeming effort rose to his feet.

"I'll go to bed, my darling," he answered, apologetically. "Bed is evidently the best place for a man in my condition. I can't make it out at all. I've done nothing out of the way to make me feel like this. It's Gable End air, I suppose."

"Good-night, dear love! pleasant dreams," he ended; then he kissed me, said good-night to aunt and Leila, who seemed to take his going as a matter of course, and went away. He looked almost as if he might fall asleep on his way upstairs, so heavy and drowsy did he appear to be.

Soon we one and all wended our different ways to bed, and the silence of a summer night reigned over earth and sky.

I wrapped myself in a cambric dressing-gown, and waited in the gloomy little passage, against father's door, which I noiselessly set ajar, so that I could peep through, as I sat with a beating, throbbing heart, full of tumult, pain, miserable doubt, counting each hour as it ticked loudly from the old hall clock.

So the summer night passed along on its way, and nothing came to show me the truth. Father slept calmly on, and the dim light burning from a small Roman lamp still glimmered on the walls, casting deep shadows where it lit, while the rest of the long, low-ceilinged room remained dark and densely shadowy. Still I waited there, waited for I—hardly knew what I dared not think what.

Then when the night waned, and I knew well enough that behind the curtained window the first faint dusky shadow of the coming dawn began to show itself to Mother Earth, the thing I dreaded came.

Before even a sound penetrated to my hearing I felt it was nearing me. A keen instinct of evil abroad made me alert on the instant,

all my senses awake to discover this coming evil. From where I had placed myself I kept my burning eyes strained with their vigil, fixed on the door in father's room, opening on the long corridor, for by that way this thing I had waited to see, which I dreaded so intensely to see, though I watched for the very purpose, would come.

The door opened slowly, oh! so slowly, so gently, so noiselessly, as if for some wondrous care for the sleeper within. Someone moved in from the outer darkness into the deep shade of the long room, passed along still in shadow, until it reached the circle of dim light, and the little table where father's medicine stood—from a small phial in the hand poured something into the bottle, still without a sound, turned for one second to gaze at sleeping father near by, dreaming no murderous heart stayed to look on its victim; then it was for the first time I saw the shaded face; in another second or two it was gone. The room was empty once more.

Heaven's mercy on me, it was—Colin!

CHAPTER XVI.

"Mine after-life! What is mine after-life?"

My day is closed. The gloom of night is come. A hopeless darkness settles o'er my fate!"

I THINK my heart must have ceased its beating for a moment. I uttered no cry, no sound, no sigh, not a single whisper. I tell you my heart stopped its beat, and I felt utterly powerless in mind, body, speech, and limb. My whole living, breathing being seemed dead within me, paralysed by the sickening sense of the awful calamity which had befallen me, crushing me under its frightful weight.

It was but a short glimpse I had of that face, a fleeting impression of a second's space of time, but that dim, glimmering light had shown me my lover but too clearly. The heavy moustache, which hid, I often told him, the smile I loved so well; the brown velvet morning coat, against which I had so often—ah! so very often—rubbed my cheek, because it felt so soft and smooth; the short cropped head! No. Shadow could not hide him from me; the murderer, the midnight assassin was my own dear love, Colin! Ah me!

At last a sobbing, shuddering sigh came from my lips, a thrill crept through my deadened veins, sense and motion returned to me, and I moved heavily through the passage back into Leila's room. I need wait and watch no more now. My vigil was past and done.

I fell on my knees by the bed, and buried my throbbing head in my hands, as if by doing so I could press away the pain and anguish is contained. Oh! that I had but been blind, deaf, dumb; and yet it was better as it was, my sounder judgment added to my first blind cry. To have married the murderer of my own father, though unknowingly, perchance to find in out by some untoward accident, or confession on my husband's part, after we had been tied for years in one silken, golden bond. How terrible that would be! No, far better to know now, before it is too late, before I have lost my beloved father for ever.

Shall I ever sleep again? Laugh, sing, or rejoice? Will life ever be to me in the future what it has been until to-night? I thought hopelessly, and my dreary heart echoed like a knell—never, never. Love, hope, happiness are all dead, passed away like shadows at noonday; life will henceforth only be sorrowful memories, a vanished bliss, a bitter regret.

"Oh, my love, my dear love, that it should have been you!" I moaned to myself, again and again, as the grey dawn came stealing up from behind the dark hills to give earth sweet greeting, and gladden the souls of men. To me coming day meant sorrow, despair, agony, and farewell to love. I knew there could but be one ending, one finish to our brief love-dream, and that was an eternal farewell. I

said the word over many times in hopeless endeavour to realise the depth, the immensity of its meaning—so hard to utter, but it must be said for all that—said at once, without any delay. I would tell no one of my awful discovery, but Colin must leave Gable End immediately—not an hour's delay, if it could be helped. There should be no time allowed him to finish his sin. He and I must part irrevocably, part for ever so long as we two lived and had our being—parted hands, hearts, and lives for evermore. There was no other way.

When morning dawned I had made up my mind fully as to what I should say to Colin, how I would bid him good-bye. It required all my strength of nerve calmly to face the inevitable and conquer despair, yet it should be conquered. I vowed it on my knees as the first roseate sunbeam came afloat the mullioned window to tell me day had come.

Soon came a low knock at the door. I rose from my knees and went to unlock it, trying to steady my trembling limbs and still my beating brain. It was Leila. I had asked her to come back to her room as soon as she awoke, that none of the servants—Prue, or, indeed, anyone—might know of my having watched through the long night. So I knew it could only be her.

She pushed open the door, and came in softly. Then she stopped and looked hard at me with a kind of frightened gaze.

"Oh, Colin! how awful you look!" she began, under her breath. "What is the matter? what has happened? Did you see anything? At least I need not ask; you couldn't look like that unless you had. Do tell me who it was. I swear not to mention it unless you wish, or until you say I may."

"No," I answered, slowly. "I shall not tell you or anybody what I have seen, that is supposing I had seen anything. It is useless to ask me questions, because I shall not answer them."

"At least you are satisfied that I am not the poisoner," she said, emphasising the last word almost vindictively.

"Yes, I am satisfied as far as that completely."

"Would you like to have this room again to-night?" she questioned, going to the window, through which the morning sun now began to stream brilliantly.

"No, I shall not want it again."

"Well, I'm glad you've found out, at any rate," she went on, calmly.

"Found out what?" I queried, turning sharply on her. There was so little sympathy in her manner that it galled me, heart-racked as I already was. "I did not say I had found out anything. What do you mean?"

"Good gracious! Colin, don't try and hoodwink me, because it's no use," she returned, pettishly. "I don't want to pry into your secrets, if you can't tell them voluntarily, but anyone can see with half an eye that you have found out something unpleasant. You wouldn't have such a face as you have unless you had. Why, you look as if you had been dead and come to life again," she ends, fixing her eyes on me.

"So I have," I said, recklessly, the anguish flooding my heart once more, and making me careless of my words. "Dead and come to life again, but what a life! I wish I were dead a thousand times over rather."

"Every dog has his day," she put in, significantly. "You have had yours according to your own saying; now, I am, on the contrary, looking forward to mine," and as she said it I almost fancied a cruel little curve came on her lips, a curve of derision, of mocking satisfaction.

I did not answer her, but passed out of the room to my own, where I bolted myself in, secure even from old Prue, who, when she came later on, I bade bring me some tea; that I had a bad headache, and did not intend to come down to breakfast. She brought me the tea, and a glorious Devonian rose, which Colin had plucked fresh from the garden and sent

up to me with his love to his "poor suffering little Blue Eyes," which Prue faithfully repeated word for word.

How little he guessed the depth, height, breadth of my suffering. How sweet the rose was, the very last gift he would ever make me. Erring, sinful Colin. So plain it all was now—so feasible that he should be the would-be murderer. Father dead, the money would be mine, to do with just as I pleased. Being mine, Colin would naturally expect me to lend or give him what would save Daryl from the felon's dock, and the house of Boughton from dishonour. At least I had the satisfaction of knowing it was not for himself that he had set about so ghastly a deed; but the blood-guiltily fact remained in all its miserable horror for all that.

Leila said "every dog has his day." I tell you mine was only half a day, very fall of bliss while it lasted, but only half a day, that is all; the rest is lost to me, snatched out of my longing grasp, a dead memory.

At last I was ready—ready to go down and bid my lover farewell. Through the mullioned panes I saw him pacing to and fro the old close-cut yew walk, smoking his after-breakfast cigarette; every now and then he stayed his steps and glanced up at my window. He did not see me, for I kept well out of sight. I stood by the dimity curtain and watched him, knowing well enough that never more should I see him pace to and fro that path.

How big, and strong, and handsome he looked, and how black his heart under that fair presence! He was guilty, yet I loved him, though shame to me in confessing it. But how can one kill love all in a moment? I could not then, it was yet so early; but I meant it should be done. There was the thick moustache, the brown velvet coat, just as I had seen it only a few hours before, and the light had frozen my being, and given me in its stead despair.

Poor Colin! and oh! poor, poor Leila!

I turned away from the window, unable to look at my dear lost love any longer. It unnerved me for the task I had set myself, made me unable to rightly distinguish 'twixt right and wrong, duty and love. Then I rang for Prudence. When she came I said to her quietly,—

"Prue, my head is still aching, and I think a little fresh air might do it good. I shall go into the orchard and lie in my hammock, but I don't want any of them to know I am up and out, because I want to be quiet, except, of course, Mr. Boughton," carelessly fastening the rose in my waist-belt, "and so I wish you to ten minutes' time from now to go to him quietly, and tell him I am in the orchard, and would like to have him there? Do you understand, Prue?" I ended, looking at her.

Of course Prue said she did, and would do exactly as I desired. I think, after myself and father, Colin came first in her estimation, and nothing pleased her so much as a little chat now and again with him.

"Master will soon cure the headache, dearie," she said, nodding her head—she always called Colin "Master," perhaps by anticipation, whereas Michael was always "Mister Michael"—"there's a naughty like a sweetheart to send the ache away. Bless him! he's a right dear young gentleman, that he is," she ended, as I passed away by the back staircase unheard, unheeded through the dairy, and so to the orchard, with ten long minutes of wrestling with Fate before me, and then a dreary vista of blank despair.

This is my story. Judge if I do not need all your pity. Here am I waiting this lovely summer morning—rich, ripe, fragrant with all July's fulness of blossom—to bid my love an eternal good-bye, to send him from me for ever—for ever, remember. To see him pass away, never to come again. The emptiness of life for me then. The cruel coldness of separation. The endless round of absence. Oh! I'll not think of it, for "that way madness lies."

I lean against the apple tree, waiting. Is it

ten minutes yet? Surely not. Stay a little, Time, I entreat—implore—beseech you. Give me a little longer space to count my lover still mine. Stop your beat, and gather in no more minutes just for once. Inexorable Time, for ever on the march. What an age it seems, this ten minutes. Perhaps he is not coming, guesses why I want him, and has already gone—left Gable End. Oh! not that, I must see him once—only once more, if even to say good-bye—just to hear his voice—see his face once again. How foolish of me, he cannot know why I want him here; of course he will come. Yes, there goes the latch of the orchard gate—he is coming!

"My poor little darling Blue Eyes! has she a headache? Let me put her head here and kiss the aching head away," and ere I know he is by my side I feel his arms round me, drawing my head against his breast, and his lips are on my cheek.

I do not draw myself away, why should I? It is the last time I shall ever feel those lips on mine, and so I let him have his way.

"I'd no idea you were up, until Prudence came to me, and, with many 'nods and becks and wreathed smiles,' as some poet has it, told me you were in the orchard."

"I told her to tell you, for I wished to—speak to you, Colin," I begin, low-voiced.

"So you shall, you darling, as much as ever you like. What do you want me to do?—gather the dessert, or help Peter dig some young potatoes?" he says, jocularly, evidently far from noticing how seriously I am trying to speak.

Can this man be a murderer at heart? Can he be? Did I not myself see him in the very act? How, then, can I for one moment doubt? I wait a moment before answering, for the act of separation is already beginning its journey with the words I am going to utter. Then I lift my sorrowful face from its resting-place against his heart, straight to his. Those clear, brown, honest-looking eyes give me back glance for glance most tenderly.

"Colin," I say, with a sob in my voice: "you must leave Gable End."

He stares at me as he replies,—

"Leave Gable End, my dearest child, whatever for?"

No doubt he imagines I have got some crazy fancy in my mind which I shall presently explain.

"You must," I repeat, earnestly, with trembling tones; "you must go away, and—never come back any more. We must—part."

Then, for the first time, his face loses its bright look, and becomes troubled.

"Part, Celia? Do you know what you are saying? Do you really mean what you say?" he urges, gravely, regarding me still with eyes of anxious love.

"Yes; I mean it, Colin," I answer, drearily.

"Do you mean that you are going to send me away—that you wish to break off your engagement?" incredulously.

"Yes," I murmur, under my breath.

"And your reason?" he says, hoarsely.

"I cannot give you the reason," I answer, falteringly, after a moment's silence.

"You cannot, Celia? For Heaven's sake, tell me what all this means? I will not believe you can really mean what you say now. You are doing it to try me, are you not? My darling, say you are," and he strains me tightly in his arms.

"Colin, it is the truth. I sent for you here just now because I wanted to tell you this, and bid you good-bye."

He loosens his arms from round me, and I lift my head from his breast. It is the first broken strand of our twisted silken love-chain. It will presently be quite severed.

"I will not believe it unless you give me the reason," he goes on, hoarsely; "you cannot be so cruelly heartless to send me adrift, and not let me hear how, when, or where I have offended you. It is not like my little, tender Celia," he ends, his voice full of pain.

Shall I tell him the why and wherefore—give him the reason he craves to know? If I did, what would be the use? Of course he would deny it strenuously. I had only my own eyesight to prove my accusation; he would probably have a hundred denials ready on his lips to force his innocence—and I to try and brand my lover with the name of poisoner! The thought was horrible. No; my lips should be sealed on what I saw, and perhaps Colin's own conscience would whisper the reason I dared not—could not tell him now.

"I am not offended with you," I return, at last, thinking that my heart was broken, but I would not tell him that.

"Then it is because of Daryl," he says, quickly; "if you are not offended with me for anything I myself have done, it must be because of Daryl. Is it not?"

In one sense he is right. From his brother's first wrong-doing came the necessitous thought for his own sin. Here, if I choose, is my loophole of excuse, since I will not confess the bitter truth.

"Yes," I murmur, drooping my head.

"I thought it would come," he says, at last, painfully; "I was afraid it would be like that. You have thought it over, and decided that, under the existing circumstances, you would rather not marry a Boughton. They say second thoughts are always best, yours may follow the rule; but do you not own it is rather cruel to throw me over, after all your promises to be my true and faithful love through misfortune and sorrow?" he asks, reproachfully.

"You have just cause to reproach me, Colin," I answer, sadly, with a heavy, long-drawn sigh.

"Think again, my dearest. Think once more before you say good-bye to me. In all the wide world no man will ever love you more devotedly than I do. Is a brother's fault to part us like that?" and he takes my palm between his.

I feel, at touch of those hands, a yearning desire to take him back to my heart, for I cannot help loving him. I think of all the lonely, desolate coming years in front of me, and I am still so young to lose hope, happiness—all that makes life sweet. If only he were not guilty! If I but knew him innocent! If, oh! terrible word of doubt; that "if" came, like a keen, sharp knife, to cut our love in twain. He was guilty. It could not be.

"No, no, Colin," I exclaim, hurriedly, drawing my hand away from that soft clasp, which makes me almost forget his sin; "it is no use, I have thought, I am not speaking from any sudden freak or fancy. I do not want to be cruel or heartless, as you call it, but we must part."

"Very well," he answers, brokenly; "since you are determined to throw me over for no fault of my own I cannot help it. Of course it is impossible to force you to keep your word. I fancied you really loved me. I find I was egregiously mistaken. Perhaps, some day, you may be sorry for what you are doing now."

"But I am sorry now," I interrupt, eagerly, for I cannot bear him to imagine me hopelessly fickle and inconstant, and I must defend myself as much as lies in my power; "you do not know how sorry, Colin, believe me," I end, most earnestly.

"It sounds incomprehensible, Celia. I should like to believe in your sorrow, but your deeds belie your words," he remarks, gazing mournfully at me. "Besides, you might have allowed me a little longer happiness. You need not have thrown me over so soon; it would have been time enough when the world cried aloud our family dishonour. Let me think you mine a little longer; then, when the full bitterness of disgrace falls on us, you will have ample excuse to send me away. If it must be then, I will go without a reproach. At least, give me space to try and realize the idea of losing you. My darling, say yes," he pleads, with tender force.

"It is impossible," I answer, with a spasm of anguish gnawing at my breast; "you must not stay at Gable End any longer—not a day. You must go at once, this very morning, and you must never—never come back any more," I pant out.

It is clearly no use beating about the bush with him. I shall have to make my meaning perfectly intelligible ere he understands that he and I meet no more after this glorious summer morn.

"Celia, there is something behind this which you have not told me. Something has urged you to this step of which I have no knowledge. You are concealing the true cause or part of it. I shall require to know what this something is. If you will not tell me I must ask some explanation from your father or Mrs. Lascelles," he says gravely, after a moment's silence.

This is of all things the one I dread most. It is not necessary because I know him guilty that all the rest should. I can fancy aunt's purring sneer, Leila's mocking laugh, Michael's silent disdain, father's grief mingled with mine—anything but that. It would be too bitter a draught to swallow. And I, who have been so proud of my lover, rejected so openly that he was mine. I could not bear it.

"No, Colin; you must not do that," I cry in an agony, "it is all my own doing, of my own free will. They have no idea even of what I am doing; you must not go to them. If you will know, there is another reason than because of Daryl; but, indeed, do not ask it of me!"

"But I do ask it of you," he returned, almost sternly. "I have a right to hear this other reason you speak of. It is matter of life and death to me, as it were, and you expect me to take for granted that you are just breaking off your engagement to me without one single word of warning beforehand. I do ask you, and I expect an answer."

I look fearfully at him. Has he really no idea of the true cause? Does no haunting conscience-pang reply to his demand to know? Or is it all a wondrous piece of acting, the subtle finess of a clever art? I am torn in two with divided thoughts.

"Come, Celia," he goes on as I wait, not knowing what to do; "you have not denied that I am right. Tell me this reason. I will know, whatever it may cost me. No one can fight in the dark. Let me know my enemy; be it man, woman, or child, friend or foe, fancy or truth, then I shall know what to do, how to combat it. Tell me, my dear."

"Oh! it is horrible, horrible; I cannot tell you," I murmur, helplessly wringing my hands together. Then I suddenly look up into his face. "Colin, if I do tell you will you swear to go away at once without asking any more questions of a soul in Gable End. Unless you do that I must remain silent."

"If it is necessary for your peace of mind that I should swear as you ask, I will certainly do so," he says, rather coldly.

I know in his eyes I must look a pitiful, cringing, feeble girl, not worth a second thought. Well he must think what he pleases, it can make no difference to our parting. The shadow is very nearly over us now—such a chill, drear, empty, soulless shadow.

"Listen, then," I pant out feverishly, keeping my two hands clenched together as I speak. "I heard by accident yesterday morning that—some one had put—poison—into father's—medicine." I stop to get my breath, which seems leaving me. My eyes fixed on Colin, I see his face change, the eyes stare back at me, and the colour dies out in pallor. This to me means guilt, but guilt found out when it thought itself hidden. "I knew it must be done in the night," I go on more evenly, the hardness of despair creeping over me; "so I made up my mind to watch unseen through the night. I changed rooms, and waited to see who desired to murder my own dearest father, who had not one single enemy in all the wide world. I did not wait in vain." I pause, choking down a sob which rends me.

"I saw the world-be poisoner, saw the poison poured into the medicine—the man who did it was—COLIN BOURGHTON!!!"

There is not a sound, not a whisper through the apple boughs, not a shiver in the long grass. The very air seemed to hold its breath in dreadful suspense. I had sunk my head when I uttered that name, and I dare not look up at Colin's face, dreading to see the anguish of confirmation written on the features I love. It seems an eternity of waiting until he speaks, though but a few passing seconds only.

"I!" he says at last, hollowly, and I look up quickly at him as his voice pierces the summer stillness. His face is perfectly blanched. Is it with fear at having been discovered? Doubtless. "I, the poisoner of your father? You must be mad, Celia! Mad to say it. Suffering under some frightful hallucination of mind and brain to credit me with so foul a deed," he goes on, passionately indignant. "I, to try and poison your father, whom I respect and honour more than I can express, and you to believe it of me! It is not possible; it's beyond all credence."

"But I saw you," I murmur, drooping my head once more. "I could not be mistaken, for I saw you do it with my own eyes. You know in your heart of hearts I am right."

"As there is a Heaven above us I deny it, Celia," he exclaims, fiercely. "I deny the existence of such a frightful treachery in my mind. I deny that you could have seen me. You are suffering under some horrible delusion."

"Do not perjure yourself by calling Heaven to witness your denial, Colin, because it's useless. I know you are guilty; I myself witnessed your guilt; do not try and make me think you worse than you are," I put in, hopelessly, for I feel I am pronouncing my own death-warrant.

"Then you choose to believe I did this assassin's work? You believe it is my hand that was traitor enough to pour the poison into your father's medicine? Answer me. Is this so?"—commandingly. How like innocence he speaks. How easily could I be deceived had I not seen for myself.

"Yes," I answer in a sighing whisper, "for I saw you."

Again there is silence; a stillness of expectancy in the listening summer air. A scarlet winged moth comes fluttering near, and settles on the low-hanging apple bough before me. I watch it aimlessly, as one watches a dancing shadow, while I stand waiting to hear Colin speak.

"Good-bye!" he says at length, with an effort and catch in his voice. Such an altered voice it is now, all the pleasant ring fled from it, the mirthful chime gone. "Good-bye, Celia Lascelles, I am going;" and he turns away as he finishes.

Going! Leaving me like that, without one single word of kind farewell to help me through the lonely coming years without him—to part in hatred, anger, misery! I had not meant our parting to be like that, guilty though he be. To feel I shall never see him again, and let him go with a cold, curt "good-bye," uttered as a mere matter of form. No. If a thousand fiends held my tongue I must speak.

I spring forward and hold his arm.

"Do not be angry with me, Colin. Let us at least part in peace. I forgive you, indeed I do—be sure of that. I know why you did it, and I forgive you," I repeat, beseechingly.

"Stay!" he answers coldly. "It is for me to forgive you for asserting a monstrous, baseless calumny. I swear to Heaven above I am innocent. You say I am guilty, that you saw me commit a deed detestable to utter. There is nothing left for me to say but 'good-bye;' to do but go. It is only what you wished yourself, hence you cannot complain." And he removes my hand gently, but firmly, from his arm. All the tender, caressing Colin has gone from voice and manner. We might be the merest acquaintances glibly repeating the conventional "good-bye" of

ordinary everyday life, not lovers parting for ever. It may be little to him, but to me it is akin to a death agony, this struggle to win the battle 'twixt duty and love. I am warring against self, and the contest is wearisome out.

I bury my face in my hands, so that I may not see him go.

"Good-bye!" he says once more, and the voice softens a very little; only my strained hearing could detect the quaver in the tones I have loved so well, but I hear it. Then the grasses rustle, as of some footfall treading them down—he has gone! Gone without even a handshake, without even one single loving word.

The silken cord which bound our hearts has snapped in twain. The black shadow looming over our heads has dropped between Colin and I. Fate has floated us away from each other, and set us drifting in opposite directions down the river of Life.

The sound of the closing orchard gate echoes through the still soft air. Then I drop my hands from my face, and look up into Heaven's azure sky. All else seems mocking me. Earth, nature, the trees, the birds all seem to join in one heart-rending jeer. "He is gone," they all cry in whispering chorus. Only Heaven's deep dark blue looks calm, clear, peaceful, and full of pity.

My brain is throbbing, my veins filled with molten fire, while a heavy, dull lethargy seems slowly creeping over my whole sentient being. I fling myself down in the long grass under the shade of the apple boughs, and wish that mother Earth would open her arms and swallow me up, or that anything would happen to deaden this fearful regret which eats into my poor heart.

"Oh, my love! my dear lost love?" is all my longing, yearning cry.

I do not know how long I lie in the deep grass. Time for me has no count, no motive power. It might be days, weeks, years for aught I care. I cannot weep; tears are denied me, and my despair too overpowering to escape in the floodgates of tearful sorrow. I only feel that I am desolate, and my lover gone.

"Celia! you must come in, there is going to be a thunderstorm. I have been searching for you everywhere; the rain will be very heavy when it comes down, and you will get wet."

It is Michael who speaks, bending over me. Then for the first time I notice that the heavens, lately so serenely, calmly blue, have become overcast with great lowering, black, thunder clouds. The little wind, sure presage of a storm, sweeps through the apple boughs, and rustles the leaves in sombre anticipation, sighing through the air as if to warn the earth that a tempest brooded near. But I, miserable as I am, care not whether there be storm or calm, tempest or sunshine.

"Leave me alone. I want to be left alone," I say, not raising my head, and I vaguely wonder if by this time they all know that Colin has gone.

"Come, Celia, dear, you must come in. You will get so wet. The rain is beginning to fall now."

"Let it. I wish to die; I don't care to live. I'm a wretched, miserable girl, do leave me alone," I go on wearily.

Stooping over me he tries to raise me from my bed of long, fresh grass. I look up at him with my haggard face. "Did you not hear what I said, Michael? Go, leave me alone."

"You are ill, Celia. You don't know what you are saying," he returns in his harsh voice, but he speaks compassionately.

"Ill!" I repeat, getting up and leaning against the tree; "yes! Michael you are right; I am ill, very, very sick at heart. Do you know that Colin has gone?—that I have sent him away, broken off my engagement, told him to go."

"I know he has left Gable End," he answers ambiguously, and I fancy the harsh voice takes a tone harder as he says it. He gave no reason, merely mentioned you had broken with him. We concluded you had good cause, and

asked no questions. He has been gone the last two hours—"and he looks away from me. I know well enough what they all think and suspect. That is why they asked no questions of him. So long as they do not talk of it it matters not to me now."

"I am glad," I say, hardly; "it is what I wished," but in my heart I know it is a lie that I am glad, or wish him gone. "I never desire to hear his name again. Never talk about him, never recall him in any way; it is the only thing I ask," and I glance defiantly at Michael. He stands gazing at the ground beneath, but he says nothing in return.

The rain begins to patter in heavy drops on the leaves above us. One long, low, rumbling of thunder sounds away in the black heavens.

"Come, let us go," he says, putting out his hand, and I move a little forward. With the first few steps I put my hand up quickly to my head—how it throbs and shoots, whirling round!

"I am dizzy, Michael, so dizzy, everything seems reeling with me. Give me your arm," I call out in a vague, wandering manner, and I stretch out one hand for his support. He gives it me, and we again move forward, but my steps are heavy. Perhaps I am ill. I never felt like this before—never.

As we pass out of the orchard and into the garden I stop suddenly.

"Listen, Michael, listen!" I say feverishly, holding up my finger in mid-air to enforce attention; "what are those bells ringing for?"

"Bells!" he echoes wonderingly; "there are no bells ringing, Celia!"

"Oh yes, there are, indeed. I hear them quite plainly. You must be deaf, for they are ringing loudly. Anyone could hear them. How merrily they chime, like wedding bells, full of love and happiness! Sweet bells! will you ring like that when I and Colin are going—stay, what am I talking about. I shall have no wedding bells rung for me. Celia has gone; but they are ringing now for someone." I end, brokenly, grasping his arm.

Michael looks scared at me, white through the sun tan.

"There are no bells," he answers quietly, holding one of my hands tightly in his; "it is your fancy, Celia, dear. Come indoors, out of the rain. You are ill. Come—" and he attempts to draw me gently towards the door, as I stand listlessly in the attitude of listening on the broad gravel path by the old yew walk.

"There they go," I cry gaily, resisting him; "listen Michael; one after another all singing how good a thing it is to live and be loved. Chime away, you joyful things, ring your hearts out with mirth and joy. It is time enough to mourn when love lies bleeding, cold in death. Dead did I say? yes; lover is dead! It is getting cold even now. Are you there, Michael? Take me in. I feel heavy and ill. I have lost love, thrown it away. Oh! my poor heart—my poor heart!"

(To be continued.)

AN ANCIENT GAME.—I have often wondered how that favourite game of the small boy, marbles, came into vogue, but never found out until a recent visit to Birmingham, where I came across an old antiquary who enlightened me. He said that a century ago it was a popular amusement with staid and professional men who used to assemble in the marble "alleys" or alcoves connected with the inns of the town, to pass an hour or two in this amusement. Think of it? Grey old men, genuine grandfathers, would hang their cocked hats on oaken pegs, and taking from private hooks their own particular knee-caps of stoutly lined leather, go plump upon their knees and deep in the delights of "alley toss" and "commonneys" and familiar cry of "knuckle down." A few of these alcoves are still in existence in connection with ancient hostleries.

THE LOST CARESS.

Two little toddlers clad for bed:
I heard them when their prayers they said,
And saw the wistful glance they sent,
To where I sat—sad, discontent.

One frowning glance I cast around
The room; and stilled was every sound:
And shrank my babes away in fright,
Unkissed, without their longed "good-night,"

That night I dreamed my babes were laid
Away in death; I bowed my head
In sorrow and in loneliness,
Remembering that lost caress.

Remembered, too, the wistful eyes,
So full of childish sad surprise;
The quivering lips; the outstretched arms;
The frown that the dear ones alarms.

Oh! anguish wrings my inmost heart.
I rouse, I wake with sudden start.
My eyes behold a glimpse of bliss—
Mamma receives their good-night kiss.

They are not dead, but waiting there.
I sue for kisses, too—my share.
And fondly feel their soft imprint
Upon my lips, without a stain.

J. S.

OPALS AND DIAMONDS.

CHAPTER XXV.

"YOU NEED NOT FEAR, SWEETHEART."

MAGGIE felt strangely desolate after the death of her father. They had loved each other so devotedly, with a perfect affection that does not very often exist between parent and child. He was the last link that bound her to the old life; she had not one of her own family left near her, and she felt alone, despite the great love of her husband, and the clinging affection of her little child, for she knew that Sir Lionel might be lost to her some day, in a worse manner than by death, and the knowledge prevented her being able to console herself fully by leaning on his love and protection, as she was but too well aware that at any minute she might be deprived of it. Of course it was not likely, yet the dreadful doom that hung over the male members of his race might fall on him at any moment, and leave her worse than widowed, so she was sorrowful and restless through the dreary winter that followed.

She tried to get rid of her sad thoughts by going among the villagers and poor people, and relieving their several wants and necessities, in all of which efforts she was ably seconded by the indefatigable Mrs. Truelove, but after Christmas she lost her. Mr. Truelove was appointed to a populous parish in London, and went thither, and the old parsonage was shut up, and one of Mr. Travers's curates officiated at Wingfield church—a sanctimonious young man, who wore bulgy boots and baggy trousers, carried an umbrella of the "gamp" order, and sported a shovel hat of such gigantic dimensions that it would have excited sentiments of envy and admiration in even the breast of an elder from the great Salt Lake City.

Sir Lionel cordially disliked this reedy-voiced young man, with his unwholesomely cadaverous complexion, and his ferret-like eyes, which were afflicted with a perpetual spasmodic, double-barrelled wink, so always drove into Inchfield church, and Lady Molyneux went with him, and thus her parish work ceased to be a personal pleasure to her, and her charities were doled out by hirelings' hands, and she gave herself up almost entirely to the occupation of adorning little Jack, whose sedate, winsome ways were irresistible, and made her almost idolize and worship him, forgetting the commandment that tells us we must not bow down to or worship anything on earth. Still it was excusable, perhaps, in her case, for she seemed to have

little else to love and worship during those chill winter days, when,—

"Snow-cold and white the landscape spread
A waste beneath a leaden sky,"

Sir Lionel being often away on business, and her mourning for her father preventing her from holding high revel at the Hall, and dooming her to "sad solitude."

She was often dull, often lonely, often passionately regretful, after she had seen her husband ride away, knowing that he must be absent for several days, and would wander aimlessly through the magnificent rooms of her palatial home, till she saw her boy coming from his morning walk in his nurse's arms; then all her languor, all her ennui, all her sorrow for her father would vanish for awhile. She would go to the nursery, and,—

"Lo, with sudden sun and flowers,
The winter world was charmed to Spring."

She forgot everything as she played with the golden-haired cherub, and sang to him softly, and tried to make him smile, and lose his habitual angelic expression of gentle resignation, which somehow or other gave her such a sharp pang at heart sometimes, she hardly knew why.

She was not sorry when the reign of King Frost came to an end, when the ice broke up, and the snow melted, and the great queer-shaped clouds, like huge scarred mountain peaks, dispersed, and that primrose colour at times filled the sky which tells that spring is close at hand, and the rooks began to build in the tall, naked elm-trees, and the pale snow-drops and modest violets looked up at the heavens; again, instead of burying their beauties amid the withered stems that once bore the blossoms of a spring numbered in the sad roll of bygone years, and the bright blue of the ground ivy, and the burning gold of the crocus, made touches of bright colour amid the flowers, and the comforting sunrays came streaming through the golden gateway of Heaven, lighting up all the earth with their refulgence and brilliance, and she could wander in the gardens and the woods that lay around the Hall, with her baby in her arms, letting him just toddle a few steps now and again, and then catching him up and perching him on her shoulder, bounding along like a young gazelle, forgetting all the stateliness and dignity she ought to have assumed as Lady Molyneux of Molyneux Hall.

"Going to hunt to-day, Li?" she asked one morning towards the end of March, as her husband came into the breakfast-room, replenished in pink.

"Yes, love. The last meet of the season."

"The last? Where do they meet?"

"At Sittingdale's."

"And this is the very last one?"

"Yes, the very last. Are you glad? There was an exultant ring about 'last.'"

"I think I am a little bit."

"Why?"

"Because I am always afraid of your meeting with an accident," she answered, looking at him tenderly; "and then I shall see more of you. I lose a great deal of your society not being able to ride."

"Would you like to learn, dear?"

"No, thanks; I think not. I have not enough courage to make a good rider, and you wouldn't let me ride to hounds, I suppose, so I shouldn't gain much by it."

"Well, no, Maggie, I would rather you didn't. I don't like to see women in the hunting field, flying over hedges and ditches, going along as hard as they can at the imminent risk of breaking their necks."

"Then you see it wouldn't be much use my learning," she observed, with a charming smile, "as I should not get more of your society by so doing."

"Haven't you enough of it now, little wife?" he asked, going over and kneeling beside her.

"No," she answered, putting her arms round his neck and resting her cheek on his. "I should never have enough of it."

"Not if you saw me every day for twenty years, without a single break?"

"Not if I saw you every day, and all day long, for a hundred years, without being absent from you a single minute."

"Darling!" he ejaculated, kissing the soft lips near his own. "And will you always love me like this?" he queried, after a pause.

"Always. What should make me change?"

"I don't know. You might."

"I think not; and you, Li—will you always care for me as you do now?" she whispered, looking down at him with her lovely eyes full of an inexpressible tenderness.

"My dearest, need you ask?"

"Yes, I want to know. Something might change you, might make you cease to regard me as you do now."

"Nothing could do that. You need not fear, sweetheart; you have everything to keep me," and then he kissed the little hands he held, and pressed them against his heart, ere he left her to mount his horse, and ride off to join the ardent throng of sportsmen that waited for him near Inchfield Woods.

The shades of evening had fallen over "Mother Earth's" wide bosom before Sir Lionel returned, and when he came he was not alone; Terence O'Hara, Lord Sittingdale, and Henrico Clinton came with him.

Maggie started with surprise on seeing her former lover; she had no idea he was staying at Sittingdale Manor, though she knew young Clinton was, and for a moment the old sickening sensation of fear seized her, chilling the bounding blood in her veins; but she recovered herself as the Irishman greeted her, a smile on his lips, a light in his blue eyes that made him look more like the Terence of former days, and did away with the sinister, repellent expression that of late had habitually rested on his handsome face.

"You are doubtless surprised to see me, Lady Molyneux," he began, in his most fascinating manner.

"I am a little," she answered steadily, suppressing the emotion she felt. "I did not know you were staying at Sittingdale, so the pleasure is unexpected."

"Thanks. I only came down two days ago for a breath of fresh air. I have been working very hard, and felt I wanted a change."

"Yes, I hear you have been very successful of late."

"Yes, fairly so," he acknowledged, with a slight curl of his lip, for he had made a perfect fortune during the past year, and his popularity grew greater every day.

"Did you have a good run?" asked the fair hostess, when the gentlemen had doffed their mud-bespattered pink and donned their swallow tails, and they sat at dinner in the great dining-room, where a bright fire blazed up the wide chimney, and the pink candles threw a rosy glow over the table, loaded with good things, and snowy napery, and sparkling glass, and glittering gold plate.

"Splendid!" responded Clinton. "Never remember a better."

"And were you all in at the death?"

"No. Only O'Hara and the huntsman had that honour. We were left behind. Not so well mounted, you know."

"Why, Li," she exclaimed looking at her husband, "I thought Pearl was the fastest horse in the county?"

"So did I," he answered, smilingly, "but you see we were mistaken. O'Hara's thorough-bred bay surpasses her."

"Yes," thought the Irishman, as he looked from the exquisite fair face of the wife to the handsome dark one of the husband, "and I will surpass you yourself, and win the day yet."

"I am surprised," continued Lady Molyneux. "Your horse must be a very fast goer," she added to Terence.

"He is!" he agreed. "I never rode a faster."

"Cost you a small fortune, I suppose?"

observed Lord Sittingdale.

"Three hundred guineas."

And Maggie almost exclaimed with astonish-

ment when she heard the price, for she began to realize that large sums the man she had known as a struggling artist must receive for his pictures.

"Is he your favourite hunter?" she inquired.

"Yes, I like him better than Mara or Blight."

"What queer names for horses!"

"Yes, they are rather strange, but I give most of my things queer titles, and do queer things too, sometimes," and he looked at her fixedly as he spoke, and she felt a shudder run through her, as though a blast of the chill March wind had penetrated to the warm, scented-room, and swept across her.

"Do you?" she said mechanically, and then added quickly, with a visible effort, "Tell me about the run?"

"Well, the hounds were first taken to Inchfield Gorse, where a great crowd of people had gathered. There were mail phaetons, filled with ladies, pony carriages driven by fair *demoiselles* in taking costumes, dog carts bringing men who had sent their hunters on before, huntamen, pedestrians, dogs, a motley throng moving slowly round the covert. After a little delay the hounds were thrown into the brushwood. The pack were every bit as keen as the riders. They went to work with a will, their tails twinkling here and there amid the scrubby oaks. Then the Tally—he! rang out. Toot! toot! toot! There was a rush and a scamper, and away we went like the wind, leaving the fair *demoiselles* and the mail phaetons, and the dog-carts, and pedestrians far behind in less than no time. After a very fast gallop of some twenty minutes we ran him to ground near Doughton Hill. Inchfield Gorse was drawn again, but without success. Then we tried Linton's Gorse, and Reynard on being found ran towards Low Scar and back, almost parallel to Denton Cross, being eventually lost not far from Sittingdale's place, after a long and steady run. At Mushroom Hill a third fox was quickly on foot, and made his way towards Merringdene; turning to the right he ran down to Blackthorn Spinney, and the hounds killed at last, after a tough race, just beyond. I was the first in at the death, and as no lady was present they gave the brush to me, and I have brought it for you, if you will accept it, Lady Molyneux?"

"Thanks, I shall do so with pleasure. What a glorious time you must have had."

"We did, indeed, splendid. Just enough to make one wish for more, which is the true way to take every pleasure, for then they never pall."

"Of course."

"There are some pleasures that never pall, O'Hara, no matter how much you indulge in them," observed Sir Lionel, as he raised a glass of Chamberlain to his lips, and looked across at Maggie, with a world of love shining in his dark eyes.

"Some don't, of course," agreed the artist, wincing as he saw the look, and wondering if he would ever have grown tired of kissing the exquisite lips of the woman who sat at his right hand. "Still most do, and as the worst disease of all is ennui, it is just as well to be cautious how we take our pleasures, lest they should pall, and we have nothing left to live for."

There was a ring of weariness in his voice, and Maggie, looking up as he spoke, met his eyes, and it seemed to her that a lost spirit gazed out of them, full of bleak despair, and hopeless longing.

She lowered hers at once, and did not look at him again during dinner.

"Won't you sing something?" suggested Lord Sittingdale, when the gentlemen joined their hosts in the drawing room.

"I shall be very pleased to, if Lady Molyneux wishes it," responded O'Hara.

"Of course she wishes it," said Sir Lionel, cordially. "We know how well you sing. It is quite a treat to hear you."

The baronet's tone was particularly hearty. Terence had made the most of his golden opportunity when Maggie left the gentlemen chatting over their wine, and had been so

agreeable and complimentary that his young host was more than ever taken with him, and thought him one of the nicest fellows he had ever met, little knowing what a wolf in sheep's clothing he was, what a serpent in guise of a dove—a serpent who would plant his fangs deep in his heart, and poison his happiness, destroying the calm joy of his existence, and that of the creatures nearest and dearest to him in the whole world.

"Thanks. I am glad you find it so. I will try and remember something without music."

He went over to the piano, and sang Milton Welling's charming ballad, "Forget, forgive," throwing a great deal of expression into the "Come back, sweetheart," part, and looking over and anon at Lady Molyneux, who lay back in her chair, with her little hands tightly interlaced, listening to Henrique Clinton as he spoke of his brother, and told her all the news about Maud, and the messages he had received that morning in a letter to give to her. She listened attentively to all the young Italian said, and tried to shut her ears to the rich rolling melody of the voice, which was so painfully familiar to her, but it was quite impossible. She could not but hear, concentrate her attention as she would, on the low-toned conversation of the man at her side, and when O'Hara began to sing "For ever," she stopped involuntarily and listened, for he seemed to be pouring his whole soul with extraordinary fervour into the words.

"I think of all thou art to me,
I dream of what thou canst not be;
My life is curst with thoughts of thee,
For ever and for ever!"

He sang as though he meant it, with wonderful expression and tenderness.

"Ah, leave me not! I love but thee!
Blessing or curse, which ever thou be,
Oh! be as thou hast been to me,
For ever and for ever!"

"Do you like that song?" he asked, when it was finished, going over and standing beside her.

"Yes, I think it is beautiful," she answered in a low voice, without looking up at him.

"So do I. It explains a man's feelings so well. A woman may be a curse to him, and yet—and yet, he would suffer anything, sometimes, rather than lose her—rather than be debarred the right of looking into her eyes, of holding her hand, of kissing her lips, of hearing her voice."

He spoke with barely repressed passion, and Lady Molyneux murmured "Yes," scarcely knowing what to say, while young Clinton looked at the handsome flushed face, and the brilliant blue eyes, and thought to himself what queer emotional creatures these artist-fellows were, and wished he would go away, in order that he, Henrique, might continue his interesting conversation with his hostess. But O'Hara had not the least intention in the world of budging an inch.

He sat down at Maggie's side, and chatted away easily and gaily, as though to make up for his emotional outbreak, and took not the least notice of Clinton's black looks. Truth to tell, he did not quite like the friendship that seemed to exist between her ladyship and the good-looking Italian, and he determined to play the part of Marplot as far as he could, so stayed beside her, till the footman announced that Lord Sittingdale's phaeton had come to take them back to the Manor, and he was forced to take his leave. Yet he was gratified by two things. Clinton had to go, too, and Sir Lionel gave him a most pressing invitation to come and stay at the Hall as soon as he could, and paint the portraits of his wife and child, an invitation which O'Hara eagerly accepted, for he knew it would help him to obtain his long wished for, long-coveted revenge, and he went away more than contented, and dreamt that night of a home of his own beyond the sea, graced by the fair presence of a violet-eyed, golden-haired woman.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ISLAND OF HAPPINESS.

"WHEN are the sittings to commence for your portrait, Lady Molyneux?"

O'Hara asked the question carelessly enough, in a carefully guarded voice, as he leaned on the stone coping of the ivy-grown terrace at Maggie's side, looking away over the park and sweep of woodland at the range of mountains that shut out from view the restless, tossing ocean, and no one would have guessed the eagerness with which he waited for her answer.

It was the month of roses, and he had been located at the Hall nearly six weeks—six weeks which had been full of moments of a mad, delirious joy to him, and of bitter, despairing regret.

It was joy to him to be near Maggie. She had lost her fear of him in a great degree—his manner had been so friendly and calm, she thought he had relinquished all idea of revenge. She did not know, alas! that it had simply taken another form; and so, remembering the past, she was kind and gentle to him, so gentle that he was insane enough to fancy that in time, with opportunity, he might alienate her from her husband, teach her to love him again, and persuade her to fly with him to southern, sunny climes, leaving behind all a true woman holds dear—honour, fame, husband, child, home.

He had been painting little Jack's portrait, and generally the mother had been present, but also the nurse, which, of course, prevented him from prosecuting and carrying out his intentions, but he hoped much from the sittings she was to give him herself.

He could easily express a wish to be alone with his model; there would be nothing strange in that, as artists seldom like to be overlooked while working, and it would give him opportunities to breathe insidious flattery into her ear, and to gradually unfold his hideous scheme for her undoing, so he listened with bated breath and suppressed eagerness for her answer.

"When you like," she answered.

"To-morrow, then."

"So soon?"

"Yes. The sooner the better, I think. The light is at its best now, and I can do a good day's work, and get it over quickly."

"There is no necessity to get it over quickly," she said, kindly, lifting her violet eyes to his; "we do not want you to hurry away from the Hall unless you wish to do so."

"I most certainly do not. I am perfectly content here—nay, more than content; I have not felt so happy for many a weary day as I have during these past few weeks."

He hazarded the last to try her, threw it out as a sort of feeler, for the glance of her lovely orbs had set his pulses tingling, had made him long to take her in his arms and kiss the sweet mobile mouth as he had done in the old days, when she belonged to him, and he had the right to do it.

But the meaning of his words passed by her; she was too innocent to understand them, and it never struck her that he would dare to make love to her—Lionel Molyneux's wife—so she said, quite calmly,—

"Then take your time over it, and do not hurry yourself."

"Thanks," he answered, with a ring of triumph in his tones, "I will do so as you kindly give me permission, and, of course, the result will be more satisfactory if much care and time are bestowed on the painting."

"Of course," agreed her ladyship, innocently falling into the trap laid for her.

"Then I am to have my first sitting to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"At what time?"

"Whenever you wish."

"At eleven?"

"Yes."

"Thanks. Then I shall expect you in my studio at eleven punctually?"

"Yes."

"I hope you won't mind coming alone? I can paint so much better when I have only my model with me; another person in the room has a disturbing effect, and distracts my attention."

"Not at all; I can quite understand your feelings. It must be very irritating to have a third person constantly in the room with you."

"It is very irritating," he replied, with emphasis.

"The only person who will be likely to come and have a peep at it occasionally is Sir Lionel."

"Oh, of course, I don't mind him!" he said, lightly.

"No; and he won't be able to disturb you very much, he is always so busy at this time of the year. He doesn't seem to think his steward manages things properly on the farms unless he keeps his eye on him, and superintends matters, and is generally out in the morning."

"So much the better," muttered O'Hara, with a sneer. "Will give me greater opportunities."

"What costume do you wish me to wear?" asked Maggie, after a pause of some minutes.

"I think black velvet would be the best, unless you fancy anything else."

"No, I have no particular fancy, and should much prefer your arranging the details of my costume."

"In that case would you kindly let me see the dress you propose to wear?"

"Certainly. I will tell Bronshaw to bring it down to the library, then you can give me any hints about it that you think will be necessary."

"With pleasure."

And then these two, who were once so much to each other, went to the library, and criticized the costly velvet dress, with its old point trimmings, and O'Hara suggested an alteration here and an addition there, and told her she must wear some jewels to enliven the somberness of her toilet, and they chatted away until dinner-time, and Sir Lionel was told about it, and his opinion asked, and his approval given of the costume O'Hara had chosen.

The next morning punctually at eleven Maggie entered the great picture gallery, where the artist had chosen for his studio, as the huge bay windows, reaching nearly to the ceiling, gave such splendid lights for painting. He was waiting for her, looking very handsome in a velvet coat of artistic cut, with a mahlstick in his hand, a flush on his face that hid the lines and did away with the haggard look habitual to it now, and an eager light in his deep blue eyes.

An involuntary cry of admiration escaped his lips as she entered; she looked so exquisitely beautiful. The heavy dress fell in graceful folds around her slender figure, and swept out far behind, adding dignity to her appearance.

It was cut low in the front, and left uncovered the warm white neck, with its flashing collar of opals and diamonds; the dimpled snowy arms were bare to the shoulder, save for the costly jewels clasped on them; her sun-bright hair was twisted into a coronet on to the top of the dainty head; there was a delicate flush on the oval cheek, a tremor about the curving lips that made her irresistibly lovely; and the man gazing at her with hungry eyes found it almost impossible to crush down the mad longing which assailed him to take her in his arms and press her close to his heart that beat so thickly, it almost seemed to suffocate him with its quick throbs.

"Is my dress right—will it do?" she asked, coming closer to him, and standing where the strong light fell full on her, showing up every graceful curve in face and figure, with startling distinctness.

"Yes; it will do," he said at last hoarsely, turning away and bending over his palette, so that she should not see the sudden pallor on his face, or notice the trembling hands he could not still.

"I am glad of that," she announced blithely, for she felt very merry and well-pleased.

Having her portrait painted was an entirely new amusement to her, and she was as pleased as a child over a new toy, and glad, besides, to be able to do Terence a good turn, for she knew that the baronet would pay him liberally for his work.

"I think it looks very well, and I hope it will come out equally well in the picture."

"I don't see why it shouldn't," he said at last, mastering the wave of passion that had swept over him and facing her. "I think it perfect, and the arrangement of your hair particularly becoming."

"Oh, thanks!"

"Will you come here and let me pose you. Ah, Molyneux!" he added, as the baronet came in. "Just in time to give me the benefit of your opinion. How shall I depict Lady Molyneux—standing, sitting, or reclining?"

"Well really, my dear fellow, I don't know," responded Sir Lionel. "Which do you think would be best?"

"Sitting, I think, a little forward. Don't you?"

"Yes, perhaps so, but I want you to do it your way. I know it will be a very good way, and I don't mean to interfere at all."

"I hope you don't," thought Terence to himself; "it will be the worse for you if you do." Aloud he remarked, "Very well, then, I shall follow my own inclinations."

"Yes, do. I only came in for a moment. I am off to Inchfield farm. One of my hunters out at grass there. I hear this morning, has strained his leg. I am going to see the extent of the damage, and if anything can be done for him."

"Yes."

"So good-bye. Good-bye, my darling. Don't tire yourself by sitting too long," and with a kiss he took his departure.

O'Hara set his teeth hard, as the baronet's lips met Maggie's. He felt that he would like to hurl himself on him and throttle the life out of him, so that he might never again touch the lips that he, O'Hara coveted. All the wild Irish blood in him boiled, as he thought of the rights that other man possessed which should be his.

"Yes."

The old craving for revenge woke with redoubled vigour. He would do anything—dare anything to obtain it. Why had love come to him as a curse, a passion of pain, a madness of misery? Why had all the fever and the fret of it fallen on his head, and nothing but the great joy of possession, the calm delight of required affection, been the portion of the other?

The golden hopes of his youth had not been realized; they had ended in a disappointment black and bitter as death. The gall had fallen to his share, the honey to Sir Lionel's. He had missed what was pleasant and good in life, or, rather, had been robbed of it. The anguish of the thought woke all the old pain and passion with bitter clamour.

But he would have revenge, he would yet win; and with that thought uppermost in his mind he worked away through the sultry, summer days, feasting his eyes on the loveliness that he told himself would one day be his, despite the bond that bound the woman he coveted to another.

Maggie did not see the glances full of passion and longing that he cast at her, or, innocent as she was, she might have taken fright, and have lost the serene feeling of happiness and security that had come to her of late. But he had posed her on a high, throne-like sort of couch, with her head turned slightly to the right and her eyes looking out over the park and woodland, so they escaped her notice; and his declaration when it did come burst on her like a thunder-clap heard on a bright, calm summer's day, and almost overwhelmed her with horror and dismay.

"Will it be finished soon now?" she asked one sultry morning after the sitting was over.

"Before very long," he replied.

"Will you be glad or sorry?" he asked a

moment later, fixing his eyes intently on the rose-blush face beside him.

"Both," she answered lightly. "'Othello's occupation will be gone.' But you, I am sure, will be unfeignedly thankful."

"On the contrary," he rejoined, pointedly, "I shall be unfeignedly sorry."

"Will you?" she said, innocently. "Why?"

She raised her eyes to his as she spoke, but something in the burning glance she met made her lids droop, and her hands tremble.

"Because I shall not pass hours daily alone here with you."

"That will not be much loss," she said, striving to speak quietly, but wringing and twisting her hands in the folds of her heavy dress, for there was the dawn of a great fear in her heart.

"It will be an unmitigated loss to me, one that I shall be hardly able to bear."

"We must bear all things," she murmured, in a voice scarcely above a whisper.

"Yes, when they cannot be remedied," he answered quickly; "but when they can, why should we go on eating our hearts out with vain longings, bitter regrets?"

"I—I don't know."

"Neither do I. My loss can be remedied. You know how passionately I did, nay, I do love you—"

"Mr. O'Hara!" She made a gesture of repulsion and indignation.

"Nay, hear me," he cried madly. "You owe me that at least. Think of the days and nights of misery your father has condemned me to—think of them and listen to me."

"I—I cannot listen to such words," and she made an effort to go, but he stood before her, barring the way, his passion-worn face darkly flushed, his eyes gleaming cruelly.

"You shall listen. Is the past, and the joys we shared together dead to you? Is my misery nothing to you? My blasted hopes, my wrecked life?"

"Let me go—let me go!" she implored.

"No, not till I have said my say, not till you have heard me, and given the answer to my prayer. I love you still. I rebel madly against the fate that has made you another man's wife. Break the bonds that hold you, and fly with me. I am your first love; you care for me, you were dazzled by his wealth. I am rich now; I will cherish you tenderly. Come with me, love."

He caught the nerveless hands that hung by her side tightly in his, and pressed them against his heart.

"Come with me, banish the clouds that surround me, make my life a long dream of happiness!"

He bent over her, and looked in her face. She did not resist, did not shrink away; she simply stood there as though turned to stone, staring before her into vacancy, with widely open eyes, full of agony, that saw nothing.

"Come," he went on softly, thinking she was yielding. "Let the memory of the old days plead for me. We were meant for each other. No power on earth can keep us apart—no power on earth can keep me away from your side. Come! Let everything be forgotten—save that we love, as never man and woman loved before?"

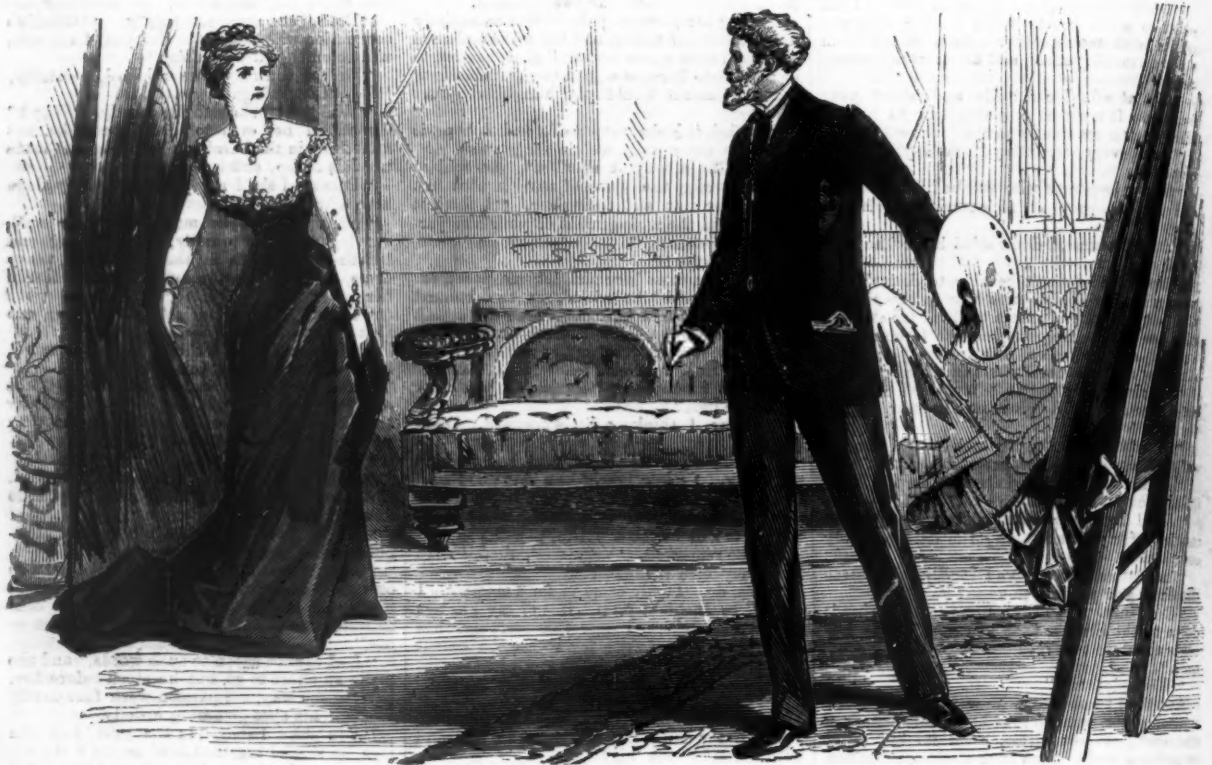
He bent lower, throwing his arm round her, and attempting to press his lips to hers. The action seemed to break the spell which had fallen on her. With a low cry she wrenched herself from his embrace, and drew her girlish, graceful figure erect to its full height, looking at him with flashing eyes.

"How dare you insult me?" she asked in low tremulous tones, the proud sweet lips quivering with suppressed emotion. For a moment he shrank from the flash of those glorious violet eyes, then he said hoarsely,—

"Insult you! What do you mean? Is the offer of a man's love an insult?"

"The offer of yours to me is an unparalleled insult," she answered proudly.

"You have made a terrible mistake. I love and adore my husband, you I despise, and



[A CRY OF ADMIRATION ESCAPED O'HARA'S LIPS AS MAGGIE ENTERED.]

shall for the future treat with the contempt you richly merit."

In an instant the white heat of rage changed the man's handsome face into something almost too diabolical to behold.

"Take care, take care!" he cried, "my heart lies for a second time at your feet. Beware how you trample on it again—beware how you make it bleed. You shall pay a terrible price for every drop you wring from it."

"Let me pass," she said, coldly; "I do not wish to lower myself by listening to such language."

She stepped forward as she spoke, waving him aside, and the look on her face was that of a woman mortally wounded, fearfully offended that such an insult should be offered to her—to Lionel Molyneux's wife. Outraged dignity, injured pride, spoke in her look and gesture.

"You shall listen as long as I please," he replied, coolly, not moving an inch.

"How dare you stop me? I will ring for my servants and have you turned out."

"No, you will not."

"I will show you that I mean what I say."

"And I will show you that you don't."

"You can't stay here after what has passed."

"I can, and shall."

"I will not allow you to do so."

"Indeed. You won't be able to make me go!"

"I shall tell Sir Lionel."

"I think not, for he would want to know what led up to the little proposal I have just made you, and I should not be over scrupulous about romancing a little; so I think, after hearing my version of the story, that he would consider I was not much to blame."

"That will not prevent me doing what is right," she answered, firmly. "I shall tell him everything in connection with yourself, from the first moment I had the misfortune to meet you down to the present time."

"I hardly think so."

"Why, pray?" she demanded, scornfully.

"Because if you utter one word with regard to what has passed between us to-day, or with regard to our former acquaintance, I will tell your husband the secret of Molyneux's Rest, tell him of the curse that hangs over him, of the fate in store for him."

"No—no!" she exclaimed, with a cry like a wounded animal. "No—no! anything but that!"

"Ah! I thought I could touch you, madame—bring you to heel like a whipped spaniel. You will be silent for his sake?"

"Yes! Oh, yes!"

"Not breathing a word, not giving a single hint?"

"No."

"And you will be the same outwardly to me?"

For a moment she hesitated, and then murmured "Yes" almost inaudibly.

"That is well," he rejoined, with thinly-veiled triumph, "and as the portrait is not yet finished you must continue the sittings."

"No—no!" she ejaculated, stretching out her hands.

"You must. Your not doing so would arouse Molyneux's suspicions, and that would never do."

"I can't—indeed I can't!" she objected, raising her lovely eyes, half-drowned in tears, to his. "Spare me that; I cannot be for hours alone with you again."

"Flattering, very!" he sneered. "But as I have no object now in being alone with you, you can have some one present—the nurse, or the baby, or the butler. Come, promise!"

"I promise," she said, faintly, thinking of the husband she loved so dearly, whose sanity she must try and guard, no matter at what cost to herself; and then he stood aside, and she staggered out of the gallery, feeling her way by the wall like one blind.

"Balked again!" muttered O'Hara, savagely, clenching his hands. "Nothing now remains but to wreak my vengeance on him. I have done with the women, he must suffer; and he shall, by Heaven! He shall suffer more than I have," and he looked as though he meant to carry out his threat, as he stood there in the great bay window, gnawing the ends of his tawny moustache, and staring moodily at the landscape.

Long he stood there gazing straight before him. Maggie's rejection of his suit was a great blow to him, and one which his own vanity had made unexpected.

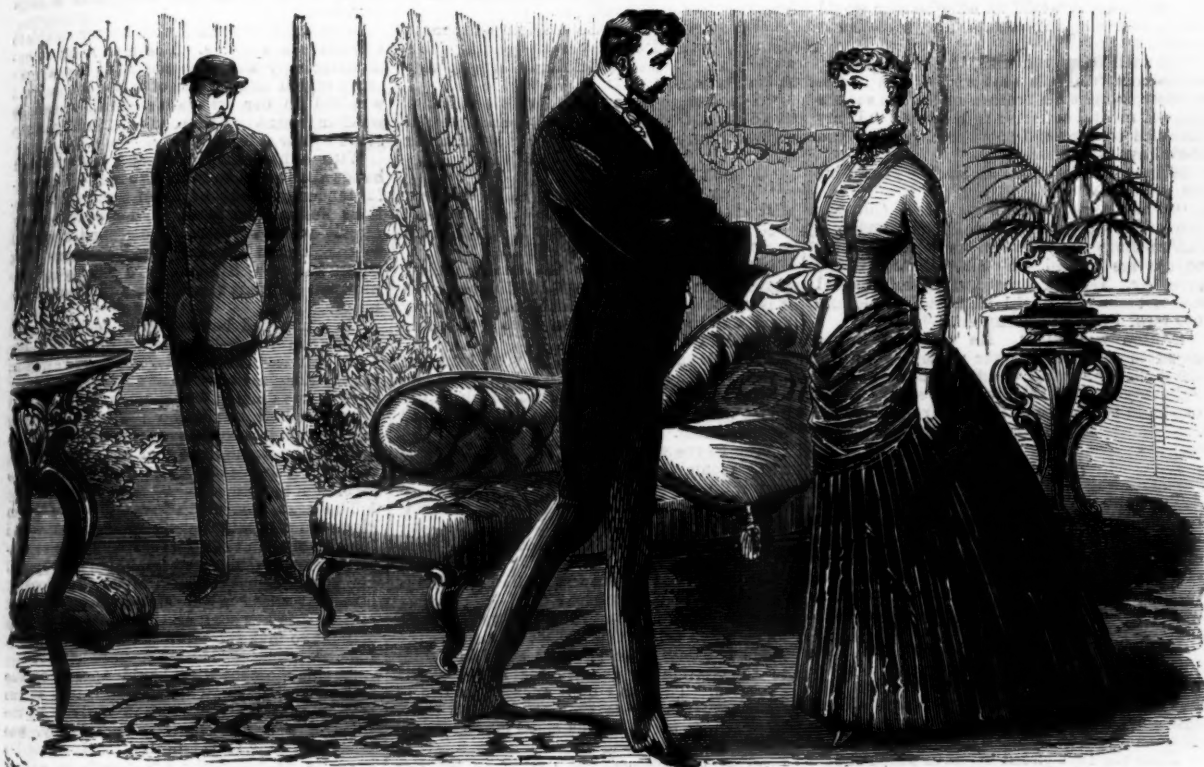
Of late he had dreamt of a life full of fair possibilities, of a happiness just within his grasp; but the beautiful vista had narrowed with startling rapidity, shutting out all that was pleasant from the future, leaving it grey, duller, more barren, and making a worse man of him—a man utterly lost to mercy or pity—stony, hard, cold, immovable, living but for one thing—his revenge!

"What a fool I have been," he said, half-aloud, "to put my faith a second time in woman, to trust to such a rotten reed. I must find my pleasure elsewhere."

Yes; but where was he to find that pleasure? There would be no pleasant places in the world for him. His Island of Happiness had sunk down into the ocean—down—down, far beneath the waves. He was like the foolish prince in the fairy tale, who kissed the sleeping princess, and so brought about his own ruin.

He had been foolish, and lost the little happiness he had possessed, for he knew, now that he had lost it, how dearly he prized Maggie's society and the friendship she had been willing to give him; for though in a way he hated her, with a mad, wild hatred, born of jealousy, still at the same time he loved her, and would to the last day of his life.

(To be continued.)



["OH! DO NOT BLAME ME," SHE SAID, "I CANNOT LOVE HORACE, BECAUSE I HAVE LEARNED TO LOVE YOU!"]

NOVELLETTE.]

BITTERLY RUED.

—20—

CHAPTER VII.

It would be difficult to describe the feelings with which Clinton first met his brother, when the latter joined him at the rooms they shared together. He felt inclined to reject in anger the hand extended to him, to bid him take his bright, handsome face out of his sight for ever, so that it should not mock him with visions of the happiness he had missed.

Horace, as it was, was surprised and puzzled at his cold, constrained manner, for there had always been the most perfect *entente cordiale* between the two.

"I have a message for you from Mrs. Fortescue, Clinton," he said; "she hopes you will return with me and stay for awhile."

"It is utterly impossible," was the curt reply.

"It is not a very gracious way of refusing an invitation," replied Horace, hurt at his tone. "I should have thought it would be pleasanter than being here alone, now London is thinning so."

"I am not a child to mind being alone. I have numerous engagements, and have no time to waste in the country."

What had come over his brother, pondered Horace, in the midst of his rising irritation. Then an idea suddenly struck him. Clinton, perhaps, thought he ought to have done better for himself than to marry a girl without a penny.

"Do you not approve of Miss Fortescue?" he asked; "do you think I ought to have chosen differently?"

"Are you tired of her already?" was Clinton's answer, with bitter sarcasm; "if you wish to draw back I dare say there is still time."

The taunt stung Horace to the quick. The fiery passions so near the surface rose to life; he dashed down on the table the glass paper-weight with which he had been toying, and sprang to his feet with a bitter oath.

"How dare you speak to me thus?" he said, his blue eyes flaming with anger. "Because I have trifled and played the fool with one or two women, would you throw that in my teeth now? What are you to understand of the love I feel for her? I came to you for sympathy and interest, and you meet me with your vile sneers and innuendoes."

Clinton listened to this outburst without a muscle of his grave, stern face altering, but with a fierce struggle going on in his heart. He longed to retaliate with angry words, to ask his brother how he dare arrogate to himself the right to declare that he was incapable of love. But he feared to betray himself, and it would have been death to him to receive the pity of his successful rival.

He was withal a just man. Horace was not to blame for his misery, and unconscious of the truth, might well feel hurt at his manner of receiving him when he came to him in the flush of his happiness.

"I beg your pardon," he said, quietly, after a moment's pause. "I had no right to speak as I did, but I am worried and out of sorts to-day, and you must not mind what I say," and he held out his hand to his brother as he spoke.

"Don't think of it any more," said Horace as he heartily grasped it; life was too bright with him just now for him to bear malice for a few hasty words. "I was sure there was something wrong, and then I have such an infernally bad temper. Well, you always said marriage would improve me, so we will see if you are right. I only wish you would look about and follow my example."

There was silence again for a few minutes; then Horace began to talk of his plans, and

informed his brother of the date of the wedding.

"So soon!" involuntarily fell from Clinton's lips.

"So soon!" echoed his brother in surprise. "What is there to wait for? She is willing, and I am willing. Have you any objection?"

"None," replied Clinton briefly.

"Will the day suit you?" proceeded Horace laughing; "you have always so much on hand that I must consult your convenience."

"I am afraid it is useless on this occasion," said Clinton, "for I fear I shall not be in England at the time you name. Carlton is going abroad for awhile, and has asked me to join him."

"Going abroad!" repeated Horace, gazing on his brother in unfeigned astonishment; "going abroad! Clinton, you cannot mean it? You cannot be so ungracious. What will people say and think if you, my only brother, the only near relation I have, be not present at my wedding?" and he paused in sheer indignation.

"What does it matter what people say?" returned Clinton. "My absence won't affect you at such a time, and I wish you well at a distance as sincerely as near at hand."

"But your absence will affect me," persisted Horace. "I cannot believe you are serious, Clinton. Surely you can join Carlton somewhere; a month or two can make no difference to you who have been abroad so often? You must give me your promise to remain, or I shall certainly otherwise defer the wedding, much disappointment as it will cost me."

To Clinton this was the hardest of all. How could he witness that marriage, see her give herself into another's keeping, hear from her lips the vow that would raise an impassable barrier between them, that would part her from him as surely as if the grave had closed over her!

But what valid excuse could he offer his

brother, if he did not wish his secret known? and, after all, it would be only he who would suffer, and one pang more or less, what did it matter?

"It shall be as you wish," he said, quietly, as he rose from his seat and walked to the window, so that his brother might not see the signs of mental suffering in his face. "If my presence be essential to your happiness you shall have it, Horace."

Horace was delighted at having gained his point.

"What a good fellow you are, Clinton; you always give up to everyone, though I can't believe you were serious in not wishing to see me turned off. Ah, Clinton, how I love her. Do you know I verily believe if I had not won her, or if I thought I should lose her now, I should kill myself."

Clinton was silent. He was not in the mood to read his brother a homily to the effect that the world would be thickly peopled did everyone take their own lives who failed to obtain the desire of their hearts.

CHAPTER VII.

The two months passed quietly away, bringing to Horace the fruition of his dearest wishes, to Leila, a day that all unconsciously she was beginning to dread. Then it was too late to draw back, she told herself. Horace loved her, she could not grieve him; and no doubt it would all come right when she was married and settled down.

But it will be readily understood that feelings such as these were not conducive to peace of mind, and her spirits became variable, and her temper somewhat uneven, so that a man less hopelessly and luxuriously in love than Horace might have found cause for wonder.

Thus the days glided by, days which should have been filled with dreams of bright, joyous anticipation. Florrie evinced far more interest in the wedding proceedings than did the person chiefly concerned. It was she who arranged the bridesmaids' dresses, who saw to the bride's trousseau, and was highly indignant at Leila's indifference on the subject of it.

"I declare," she said, "you take it so unconcernedly one would think it was quite an everyday affair to be married."

"You don't want me to lose my head because I am going to have a few new dresses, do you?"

"I thought you were going to gain more than that," was Florrie's answer.

A fortnight before the marriage, Horace, who had been again up to London, returned to L—, not to quit it till he should take his bride with him. He had hitherto stayed at the Fortescues, but this time he took up his quarters at the one hotel the little village boasted. He had endeavoured to persuade his brother to accompany him, but to no purpose, Clinton only consenting to join him three days before the wedding.

The day of his arrival came round at length, and Leila, as she stood before her glass that afternoon preparing for a walk with Horace, began to wonder how he would meet her. Then she fell to speculating how it would have been with her had it been Clinton to whom she was about to plight her troth. She suddenly awoke to the knowledge that her pulses were thrilling in a manner hitherto unknown, and with a shudder she hid her face in her hands as does a person to whom some sudden vision has presented itself on which they dare not dwell.

Horace's voice at that moment summoned her, and she hastily ran down, as though anxious to escape from her thoughts.

"How pale you look, dearest," said her lover, tenderly, as he drew her hand within his arm. "What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing," she answered, hastily. "I wish you would not always be studying my looks. It is so worrying."

Horace did not answer. He saw she was in

some way out of sorts, and he sought therefore to amuse and divert her.

"We might go to the station and meet Clinton," he said, as they were wending their way home. "We should not have long to wait at the station."

"You can go if you wish," returned Leila, "and I will take advantage of the time to call and see Mrs. Payne. I shall not have another opportunity before I go."

"I won't leave you alone, dear."

"What nonsense, Horace. You said you wished to go, and I don't mind being alone."

Not a very gracious speech, but Horace would not allow himself to be ruffled by it.

"If Clinton comes by the earlier train I shall not be in time to meet him," he said, "as it is about dark now. In that case I shall hurry back, and be waiting for you when you come out of Mrs. Payne's."

Mrs. Payne was the lady who kept the school which Leila had attended. The two parted at the top of the road in which her house was situated, Horace pursuing his road to the station.

Mrs. Payne was out, and Leila as she came away from the house, pondered on what she was to do.

"I must wait a little while," she thought, "or else he may walk up and down here ever so long. If the train is in when he gets there he will be back soon. I wonder if he knows of the short cut across the fields that brings him out just opposite here?"

She sighed as she spoke. It was she who had showed Clinton that short way across the fields one day when she had gone with him to the station to inquire for a packet he expected. They had been engaged in one of their numerous passages of arms all the time, in which, as usual, he had come off victorious.

She paced up and down now in a sort of feverish impatience, not daring to let her thoughts dwell on the one subject to which they would wander. So engrossed was she that she did not perceive a man, who was lying under the hedge, rise and approach her.

"I'll beglad of a copper, if you please, miss."

Leila started violently at the gruff, uncouth voice fell on her ear. She raised her eyes, and saw a tall, powerful-looking ruffian standing before her. Though not by any means a nervous girl, and withal accustomed to walk about alone, she felt the position hardly a pleasant one. The road was a lonely one, and there was no one in sight.

To refuse the man she did not like to, though his tone and appearance were not warranted to invite sympathy. She drew forth her purse and handed him two or three coppers.

"Is that all you be going to give me?" he asked, menacingly.

"That is not the way to ask for charity," said Leila, endeavouring to speak with dignity, though her heart was beginning to throb painfully.

"You'd be as polite yourself, I daresay, if you had not tasted a morsel for three days," returned the man, with a jeering laugh. "I'll just trouble you to hand over that purse."

Leila had plenty of pluck, and her spirit rose at this daring effrontery.

"I shall do no such thing," she answered. "I have given you all I intend to, and I will thank you to let me pass," and she tried to walk on, but the man blocked her way.

"Not so fast, young lady," he said, "I advise you to give it up of your own accord, or else I shall have to make you."

"You dare not," answered the girl drawing herself up and speaking firmly, though her lips quivered.

Again he laughed mockingly. "Dare not? You're a spirited one, you are, but you don't come over me; you'd better not measure yourself against me, or you'd chance to get the worst of it," and he came a step nearer as he spoke.

In despair Leila cast her eyes around, there was no one to come to her rescue.

"Give me that purse at once, or I'll do for you," continued the ruffian with a savage oath,

as he drew forth from his pocket a large bludgeon.

Leila stood transfixed with horror, unable to articulate a syllable. The man held it out threateningly and was about to lay a rude grasp on her arm, when of a sudden a hand was laid on her assailant's shoulder, and he was flung ground into the road—Clinton Treherne stood by her side.

With a half-stifled cry and outstretched hands she turned to him; she met his mournful tender gaze, and a flood of tumultuous emotions seemed to loose in her soul, and to utterly overpower her. The ground appeared to rock under her, and everything grew dark before her eyes. She staggered blindly towards him, felt his arms round her, and then all was blank.

He supported her tenderly, feeling a will pleasure in thus holding her in his arms. For a few minutes she was his, her head rested on his shoulder, her heart beat against his. "My darling, my darling," he murmured, as he bent over her, and suddenly a passionate longing seized him to kiss those pale lips so near his own. Who would know of it, and it would be the first and last time he would taste the forbidden happiness.

The next moment he was pressing warm kisses on her unresisting mouth. It would seem as though their fervour woke her to consciousness, for she gave a faint sigh and opened her eyes. She saw the impassioned look of love that shone in his, and that look seemed to pass into her soul, and with a sudden flash of light to make clear all her bewildered feelings.

At this moment who should appear on the scene but Horace, who, having learnt at the station that his brother had arrived by the train due a few minutes previously, was hastening back to rejoice Leila. Imagine his surprise at beholding his fiancée in a half-fainting condition supported in his brother's arms.

It was well that Clinton possessed such control over his emotions, or the situation might have been an awkward one. As it was he gently assisted Leila to rise while he said quietly:

"You should not allow Miss Fortescue to wander about alone, Horace; she has just had a great fright," and he briefly detailed what had occurred.

In a moment Horace's arms were round her, Horace's voice calling her by every tender name.

"Where is the ruffian?" he asked, turning to his brother, his eyes flashing; "you don't mean to say, Clinton, that you let him escape?"

In good truth, in those moments when Clinton held Leila in his arms, he had totally forgotten about the man, who, not stunned by his fall, had profited by his engrossment to make off.

"I had only one pair of hands, my dear fellow," returned Clinton, finding refuge, as is often the case under strong emotion, in careless speech; "and for the moment they were not at liberty to collar the ruffian."

"Leila, dear, you must try to describe him to me," said Horace, "so that I may give information at the police station. By Jove! I'll shoot him if I came across him."

"You might chance in that case to find yourself in a rather unpleasant position," returned Clinton, sarcastically, "besides which it is to be hoped you don't carry loaded arms about with you."

Horace laughed. "No, but I have a pair with me at the hotel which might be put to a worse purpose than braining that ruffian. And now, dear, do you feel able to walk home?" he went on, turning to Leila.

"Quite," she answered. "I don't know how I came to faint. I have never done such a thing before."

They proceeded slowly homewards, Leila leaning on Horace's arm, Clinton walking by his brother's side. His turn was over now, and he felt a blind unreasoning jealousy at

Horace as he watched his little airs of pre-eminence.

CHAPTER IX.

LEILA excused herself from joining the family circle that evening on the plea of a headache, which all felt was not a matter of wonder, though Florrie did remark that "she was surprised, as there was no harm done, that Leila should let herself be so knocked over," and thereby drawing down severe rebukes on her from Horace.

But when the next morning, on his coming in to breakfast, she was still absent from table, he felt rather disappointed.

"Tell Leila I shall expect to see her when I return," he said to Florrie. "I am just going into the village to the police-station to know whether they have heard anything of the man."

Leila, meanwhile, had spent the hours of the night and evening previous in hopeless misery. The truth stood revealed at length; it was Clinton whom she loved, and in two days she was to wed Horace. This then was the meaning of that fear to scrutinize too closely her heart. Oh! why had she suffered herself to yield to Horace's persuasions?

That she had not been in love with Clinton when he proposed to her was true enough, but without her knowing it, she had been, perhaps, on the high road to such a result. In her childish fit of temper she had spoken as she could not otherwise have done; and had he not pursued his suit would have speedily given to love him, for no woman could have long remained insensible to the charm of Clinton's preference.

"L'absence allument les grandes passions et aiguë les petites," for rarely till we lose a thing do we value it sufficiently. But Leila chose to feel piqued at his abrupt departure, and would not acknowledge to herself the blank it caused, though it had been that which made her glad to seize at anything that would divert her thoughts. From the moment she had accepted Horace she had been like one in a dream till now, when self-deception was no longer possible.

The steady gaze of Clinton's grey eyes, the low tones of his rich, musical voice thrilled her soul; one of his reproving speeches she felt would please her better than all Horace's words of love. "What was she to do?" she murmured, over and over again, as she paced her room, wringing her hands; "why had she been so blind, so weak?"

It was little wonder that, a prey to such thoughts as these, she should not feel equal to getting in an appearance at breakfast the next morning. When Florrie delivered to her, through the closed door, Horace's message, a sudden thought struck her. She would ask him to defer the marriage for awhile; she would plead illness, anything that would give her time, and she might afterwards be able to break it off altogether. She gave no thought now to the suffering she would cause her lover; she only felt it would be impossible for her to become his wife.

She arranged her dress, bathed her eyes, and went downstairs to await Horace's return in the drawing-room. How quiet, how cheerful the little apartment looked, with its windows opening on to the velvet lawn, the white curtains away to and fro in the soft, summer breeze that was laden with the perfume of countless flowers. Could she be the same girl who a few months back had had a heart as light as those summer winds?

Ten minutes, a quarter of an hour passed, and her flitting courage, born of despair, began to fail her. Horace was not likely to consent to a postponement of the wedding for some flimsy excuse, and how could she tell him the truth, that she did not love him? She sank on her knees by the side of the sofa, and burying her face in her hands, broke into a despairing flood of tears.

"Leila, why are you crying?"

As Clinton's voice fell on her ears she started

to her feet, and brushing away her tears, stood there confronting him, her hand pressed to her throbbing heart. It was impossible not to perceive she was the prey to some deep emotion, and Clinton's gaze grew softer as he looked at her.

"What are you in distress about?" he asked, gently. "Can I be of any service to you?"

A wild gleam of hope awoke in her heart. He had loved her, he loved her still, if she could trust to that look she had yesterday seen bent on her; surely if he knew she returned his affection he would aid her in breaking off her engagement. But she could find no words in which to express herself, and she stood before him in silent misery.

"At such a time as this you should be all smiles," he went on, drawing nearer to her.

"What can cause a bride to indulge in such tears?"

It is that, it is that," she murmured in hoarse tones, as she raised her eyes, and Clinton started at the agonized look they bore. "I cannot, oh! I cannot go through with this dreadful marriage."

Neither of them heard a light springy step on the turf outside, saw a man approach the window, the light of love and happiness in his eyes, to start back the next moment when these words fell on his ears, like one who has received his death-blow.

Clinton gazed on her as though doubting the evidence of his ears.

"I cannot help it; I cannot help it," went on Leila, wildly. "I did not know what I was doing, but I see it all now. Oh, if you ever cared for me, save me from this marriage."

"Do you know what you are saying?" said Treherne, sternly, and his face did not even soften at her allusion to his affection. "What do you mean by winning Horace's love, by accepting it, and two days before your marriage declaring you cannot carry out the voluntary promise you have given?"

"I do not love him," murmured the unhappy girl, as she hung her head.

What sound was that that broke the summer stillness?—surely the hoarse sound of a heart-broken moan.

"You do not love him?" echoed Treherne, his grey eyes flashing. "It is rather late, is it not, to bring forward such an excuse. Why, pray, do you not love him?"

How his masterful tones seemed to subdue her. She stood there before him like a culprit before her judge.

"Child," he went on; "do you mean to spoil his life as you did mine? You had the grace to refuse me on the score of lack of love; why not have been equally frank with him?"

The first part of this speech alone caught her ear. It was true, then, he loved her still; surely he would not let her sacrifice herself? Poor, blind, unreasoning Leila, she had yet to learn that a man's honour may be stronger than his love.

"Ah! do not blame me," she said, lifting her lovely, tearful eyes to his. "I know I have acted culpably, but it was unconsciously so. I cannot love Horace, because I have learnt to love you."

It was said so pitifully, so pathetically, that it would have touched the heart of a man who was not already in love with her. One can well understand, therefore, how it affected him to whom she was so dear.

Every consideration was, for the moment, obliterated in the overpowering rapture her words caused him; he made a step forward to take her in his arms, the next he paused, fighting fiercely with the temptation that assailed him.

His brother's words flashed across him, "If I were to lose her now, I should kill myself." How could he make his happiness from the wreck of another's life? How could he rob him at the eleventh hour of his promised bride? In what light would the world view such conduct? No, he felt he could never look an honourable man in the face again, the fatal mistake was made, and could not be repaired.

He looked at Leila, who stood with her face hidden, not daring to look up to note the effect of her words. Did she really love him? Would she, too, suffer? Anyhow, it was too late to help her. He came nearer to her, and took one of her cold hands that hung nerveless by her side.

"You do not know what you say," and his voice was cold and forced, with the restraint he put on himself. "You are excited and overwrought. When you are calmed you will perceive you must fulfil your promise to Horace, for you have spoken too late."

His words chilled her to the heart. "You have then ceased to care for me?" she said, in a stifled tone.

He did not answer, though bent on sacrificing himself and her; he could not frame his lips to a lie.

She looked up with sudden impetuosity, with a last desperate resolve. "Tell me," she asked, "if I could free myself, would you still say the same?"

His resolution never faltered. "Yes," he answered quietly, "I should still say the same."

She drew back as though she had received a blow; she turned and walked slowly to the sofa, with hands outstretched like one in a dream, and sunk down on it in an agony of self-abasement. He looked at her for a few moments in silence, with a world of love, pity, and despair in his eyes; then feeling he dare not trust himself longer in her presence he softly left the room.

CHAPTER X.

WITHOUT in the bright sunshine, nature with her smiling face seeming to mock him in his misery, stood the unhappy spectator of this scene.

In those few minutes Horace seemed to have aged twenty years. At one blow all his bright gracious manhood was shattered; his face was wan and haggard, his blue eyes wore a dull fixed look. She did not love him; she could not marry him; his white lips repeated the words over and over again. The force of the shock seemed to have paralysed the fiery passions that usually broke rein so easily, he felt no anger against his brother, he felt no anger against her; he was only conscious that life was over for him, that a dark cloud had descended on him, which no ray of light could ever brighten.

Leila's repeated asseverations that she did not love him sufficiently had ever failed to impress him greatly, so absorbed was he in his desire to win her. "If she does not love me as fully as I could desire," he thought, "at least she loves me none else, and my devotion will soon win her."

And now he learnt that her heart was utterly closed to him, that he could never hold a place in it, that all her love was given to another, and that one was his own brother.

He could not give her up, he said wildly to himself; he could not relinquish all that made life worth holding; he might still marry her, Clinton's own words told him he would not dispute his claim, though he had plainly seen his brother loved her too. Marry her! What a poor satisfaction own the casket, and know the priceless jewel it contained was in another's keeping! Marry her, with the knowledge of her secret, standing like a grim spectre between them!

No, that were impossible. And live to see her another's wife, to watch their happiness whilst he stood without in the cold, to know himself pointed at as a discarded lover, that were more impossible still. For him there would be no rest, no peace till the grave closed over his head. Poor Horace! Love such as his, wild, unreasoning, knowing no control, yielding to no restraint, is, indeed, a curse to its possessor.

How long he stood there he knew not; at length he stepped forward mechanically and entered the room by the open window. Leila still sat in the same attitude at the further

end, her back to the light. She did not hear him enter, and she started violently when he laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Leila,"
Still she did not turn her head as she asked, "Do you want anything?"
"No, I am glad to see you down again. I hope you have recovered from your fright of yesterday."

"I do not feel very well!"
A silence between them, then Horace spoke again. "Have you no greeting for me, Leila?"

"What do you mean?"
In her present frame of mind his presence seemed to string her nerves to the utmost tension.

He dropped on one knee by her side, and slid his arm round her waist.

"The greeting that a girl usually gives to her lover, dear," he said, and his voice was hoarse from suffering, but she was too preoccupied to notice it.

"You are always wanting me to kiss you, Horace, and it is so absurd," she answered, involuntarily shrinking back.

He saw the action, and it stabbed him to the heart afresh.

"Suppose I ask it as a favour, Leila, and as such for the last time?"

"What do you mean?" she asked again, somewhat startled at his tone.

"What do I mean? In two days, if all goes well, you will be my wife, will you not?" he went on, as though determined, poor fellow, to gauge his misery to the utmost; "in two days you will be mine inseparably; I shall have the right then to as many kisses as I wish. Is it not so?"

His words brought her miserable position forcibly before her, and, forgetful of his request, she sat as one turned to stone. He rose from his feet with such a look on his face as would have moved the stoutest heart to pity.

"If you will not kiss me, Leila," he said, "at least you will not forbid me to kiss you? Some day, my darling, you may be sorry not to have granted my request."

He stooped and took her in his arms, kissing her with a passion and a fervour that frightened her. Again she shrank back.

"How cold your lips are!" she said, glancing up at him for a moment, but his face was in shadow as he bent over her, and she could not see it plainly.

"Are they?" he returned. "I may not be quite myself. I am perhaps a little overcome at the prospect—the prospect before me. My darling, if you knew how I loved you, to save you from sorrow I would count my life well bestowed."

He bent again, and pressed again one long, lingering kiss on her forehead, then he withdrew his arms, and turned away.

"I must leave you now," he said, quietly.

He walked to the window, the fixed look of some desperate resolve plainly visible on his face, amidst all the anguish written there. Her refusal to kiss him, her evident shrinking from his embrace, had put the finishing touch to his fevered brain.

At the window he paused for a moment, his eyes resting yearningly on Leila with all the intensity of a last farewell.

"Good-bye!" he murmured, "my darling, good-bye, for ever."

Leila sat there alone for full an hour after, and at length her troubled thoughts grew clearer. She would adhere to her resolution; she would tell Horace the truth, he loved her so well she could not deceive him. Yes, she would tell him all, suppressing, of course, Clinton's name, and if he would release her from her promise, she would go away and hide herself; anything would be better than entering on her new life with such feelings as were now hers.

She determined to seek him at once, lest her courage should again fail her, and she hurried to her room to fetch her hat. As she was

crossing the hall on her way out she met Florrie.

"Goodness me!" she exclaimed, "how white you are still! Where are you off to?"
"I am going to the hotel. I want to see Horace," returned Leila, averting her face.

"I'm not sure that it is proper," said Florrie, looking wise, "for you to call on him, and he was only here a short time ago; I saw him leave. It must be something awfully important if it won't keep. Well, I don't suppose you'll always be in such a hurry to run after each other. I should not be surprised if you'd had your first quarrel this day week."

Florrie finished her oration to the empty air, for Leila had passed out into the garden.

The hotel was not very far distant; it stood back from the road, in some prettily laid-out grounds, through which she hurried as though afraid for one moment to pause, or give herself time to think. When she reached the entrance she noticed that the hall was full of people, and that a certain air of mystery and excitement seemed to pervade the whispering groups.

On ringing the bell to attract the attention of one of the functionaries, she found herself of a sudden the centre of observation.

"Is Mr. Horace Treherne in?" she asked, failing utterly to understand the meaning of the prolonged and sympathetic scrutiny of which she was the object, unless it suddenly occurred to her, that, like Florrie, they did not think it proper for her to call on her betrothed.

The man she addressed made no answer, but looked at her in a hopeless, bewildered manner that, in her frame of mind, irritated her in no small degree.

"If so, will you tell him at once that Miss Fortescue wishes to speak to him," she went on, in a dignified way.

"Indeed, miss, but I think, I think—" stammered the man, "you'd better go home. They will send to tell you."

Leila gazed at him in blank astonishment, and was about to ask him for an explanation, when at that moment she perceived Clinton Treherne descending the stairs.

One or two of the group went up to him and whispered something that evidently had reference to herself. She stood motionless, her heart beginning to throb with painful apprehension as she saw him making his way slowly towards her.

When he drew near she started in affright, for his face was white as death, and there was a look of horror in his eyes that froze her blood. In silence he drew her hand within his arm, and led her into a small private sitting-room at the end of the passage, which he and his brother had engaged for their use.

But even when they were alone Treherne did not seem able to find speech. He sunk into a chair, and hiding his face in his hands groaned aloud.

"Clinton, oh! Clinton! for Heaven's sake, tell me what it is!" gasped Leila, every vestige of colour leaving her cheek. "I cannot bear this suspense."

He raised his head, and as he did so his glance fell on a letter lying on the table in his brother's handwriting, which neither of them had before perceived. With a stifled exclamation he caught it up, and Leila, guessing that his overpowering distress must have reference to Horace, leant over him as he tore it open.

She had hardly read over him for a moment ere a wild scream broke from her; she threw up her hands to her head as though her reason were deserting her, and the next instant dropped senseless at Clinton's feet.

CHAPTER XI.

LIKE one in a dream, Clinton raised Leila from the ground, and placed her tenderly on the couch. He watched over her till he saw some faint signs of returning consciousness; then he took up again the fatal letter, and

with that look of horror deepening in his eyes, and his face wan and drawn with anguish, he read on to the end.

These were the words which, written in irregular, illegible characters, seemed to burn themselves into his brain.

"Clinton, I know all. When I tell you I overheard your interview with Leila this morning, you will understand me. When you read these lines I shall be dead, for I cannot live to face the misery before me. I do not blame you, for it seems you loved her before I knew her. I do not blame her, for I know she would not have wilfully deceived me. I love her so dearly that I will not stand in the way of her happiness, but I cannot live to see another man possess the priceless treasure on which I had set all my hopes. Life is valueless without her; I have not the courage to face the dreary years uncheered by her love and companionship. Let no thought of me cloud her future; let me at least think that my death will take away all barriers between you. You who love her so dearly can pity and forgive me. May God in whose presence I shall soon stand be merciful to me too.—HORACE."

It was even so. Horace Treherne, mad with grief and despair, had taken his life with his own hand. Barely an hour since Clinton had been summoned to his brother's room by the scared authorities of the hotel, the unfortunate young man having been found a few minutes previously dead in his chair, a pistol lying on the ground at his feet.

The shock of grief and horror had at first utterly paralysed Clinton, but he speedily became aware that there was no time yet for indulging in personal sorrow. A word that was passing from lip to lip roused him and made him conscious that there was work to do in the present which would need all his energies.

There seemed but one conclusion to arrive at—suicide; and that was the word that made him thrust aside with an iron hand the agony of emotion that almost overpowered him—that conjured up thoughts that froze his blood with horror.

The keynote to the dreadful mystery he held in his hand now; the dreadful doubt was certainty, and how could he fight against the overpowering testimony?

"Oh! Heaven have mercy on his soul!"—the words fell from his white and quivering lips as he raised his eyes. "Pity and pardon him, my poor unhappy boy!"

A cold touch on his arm startled him; looking round he saw Leila, recovered from her swoon, kneeling by his side.

"It is not true, is it?" she said, in hoarse tones. "It is surely some horrible dream that I had!"

Her glance fell on the letter that Clinton still held in his hand, and another cry of anguish broke from her.

"Oh, Heaven! it is too true!" she moaned. "He is dead, and I am his murderer! How can I bear it—how can I bear it!"

Clinton's heart bled with pity as he raised the unhappy girl.

"Leila," he said, in low impressive tones, "try and listen to me for a moment. You must command yourself; you must let no one hear such words as you just spoke. This letter must remain a secret between us for ever; no one must know the real truth. You can understand, can you not, what I wish to avert?"

She was too dazed, too grief-stricken, to take in the full significance of his words, but now, as ever, she instinctively yielded to his force of will.

To him, however, was present the terrible ordeal that must be gone through, the wonder, the speculation, the suspicion that had to be confronted, and which would wring his sensitive soul.

Let us pass lightly over the events of the next few days. The quiet little village seemed shaken to its foundation by the tragedy that had taken place, and deep was the sympathy for all whom it touched, especially for the

unhappy young lady who had been thus bereft of her lover two days before her wedding.

What was the truth of the dreadful mystery? was asked on all sides. What could induce a man to commit suicide, if such it was, with such a fair prospect opening before him? Had the consequences of some early folly confronted him on the threshold of his new life, and he had felt himself unable to face them? Or had some monetary difficulty suddenly overwhelmed him?

These and other questions were asked at the inquest, to all of which Clinton replied emphatically in the negative. His brother was in no embarrassment of any sort, and was about to marry the young lady of his heart and choice. How did he come to be in possession of firearms? His brother Clinton stated that he had intended taking his wife for a long tour abroad, to all sorts of out-of-the-way places, and he had heard him say, laughingly, that there was no knowing what adventures they might encounter, so it was well to be prepared for any emergency. His brother, Treherne continued, was proverbially careless; he must have been trifling with the pistol, forgetful that it was loaded, as it must have gone off by accident. He had parted from him only two hours previously, when he had been in the highest and best of spirits.

In fact, all influence was used to bring about a verdict of "accidental death," which was at length accorded. Treherne breathed more freely; the world would never know the dreadful truth.

The day of poor Horace's funeral dawned cold, for the time of year, wet and dreary, a fitting morning to witness the last sad ceremonial of a life so tragically closed. The mourners were few, the brothers had no near relatives; there was Jack, and one or two old friends of the poor fellow's, who had been staying in the village to assist at his wedding.

Clinton felt as though he were in some horrible nightmare, as he stood there by his brother's grave, as though hope and courage and energy were killed within him for ever. Before him rose Horace's bright handsome face, with his laughing blue eyes. He pictured him as he had seen him that day, not so far distant, when he had told him of his happy love, and then he seemed to hear again those reckless words that had come so true.

As these thoughts all coursed through his mind, Treherne groaned aloud in bitterness of heart as he hid his face in his hands, and inwardly prayed to be forgiven whatever share he had had, however innocent, in bringing about this dreadful tragedy.

CHAPTER XII.

In the afternoon of that same day Treherne called at Mrs. Fortescue's to pay his adieu, as he was leaving in the evening for London. He had not seen Leila since the day of Horace's death, but he had heard how she had remained almost ever since in a kind of stupor, never speaking a word, refusing to eat, only moaning continually.

"I don't know what to do with her," said poor Mrs. Fortescue, her tears flowing freely. "I daren't think what may be the consequences of the shock. I got her down to the drawing-room to-day in hopes of rousing her a little, but I don't think it's of any use."

"Might I see her?" asked Treherne, hesitatingly.

"Yes, certainly; it may do her good if you can get her to attend to you," and she led him to the drawing-room and shut him in with her, alone.

Leila, who was sitting in an armchair at the farther end, never moved at the sounds. The blind had been turned to emit some light, and it fell on her as she sat there, her white hands folded in her lap in a drooping attitude.

Treherne involuntarily started back. What a terrible change had these few days made in her appearance!

Was this the girl whose bright bewitching beauty had, even in her photograph, taken his heart captive at once?

For the moment he forgot the recent terrible events. He only saw she was suffering cruelly—he only knew that he loved her and longed to comfort her. The next moment his arms were round her, as he tenderly whispered her name.

She broke from him in horror, and stood up with one hand pressed to her throbbing heart, the other outstretched, as though to keep him from her.

"Don't touch me!" she said, in hoarse tones. "Don't come near me! Have you forgotten that I am the cause of his death—that I broke his heart and blasted his life! Oh, Heaven!" she went on, lifting dull, haggard eyes, "how can I bear it, how can I bear it!"

"Leila, my poor child!" said Treherne, "I know how terrible it must be to you, but you must try to bear up. You must not take such blame to yourself."

She went on as though she had not heard him.

"I hear his voice in my ears always reproaching me; I see him how he was, and how he must have looked afterwards; I know that never in all the long years to come shall I feel at peace with myself!"

She put her hands to her head as though her brain reeled beneath its weight of suffering.

"Leila," said Treherne, speaking in firm, decisive tones, which commanded attention. "You must not give way to such thoughts. If you did wrong it was unintentional, and you were going to try to repair it. You could not tell that he would overhear us—that, poor fellow, his love would lead him so astray! Does he not say in his letter that no blame attaches to you, and what there is I must share with you; for had I been less proud, less arbitrary, I might have taught you sooner to know your own heart!"

His words seemed to have some effect on her, for the wild look faded from her eyes.

"My heart," she repeated, sadly, "I think my heart is dead; it is only filled with a great loathing and a great horror of myself. Clinton, we must not meet after to-day; between us there lies a grave—his grave a barrier that must separate us for ever."

It was no time for arguments, of that he was well aware, and at that moment he had no inclination to use them.

"It shall be as you wish, Leila," he said gently as he rose to leave, feeling there was no use in prolonging the interview. "I am leaving here to-day, as you shall not see me again till you can do so without pain. Good-bye, dear, and Heaven bless you, and help you to bear your trouble bravely."

He took her in his arms as he spoke, and kissed her gravely and tenderly. That kiss was her salvation; it seemed to loosen the terrible pressure on her aching heart and brain. She gave a great gasp, and burst into an overpowering flood of tears, the first she had shed since that terrible day.

Treherne knew how they would relieve her, and he did not attempt to soothe her; he placed her gently on the sofa, and with one parting look left her to herself.

Six years have passed away, bringing in their train some changes. Florrie had married, and had a young family growing up round her. Jack also had entered the holy state of matrimony. He had been fortunate enough to win the affection of a young lady with a considerable fortune of her own, and influential friends who could materially advance his interests.

Leila was with her mother still, not at L—. The place, with its haunting memories of happiness and sorrow, became odious to her, and soon after the events above related they had moved nearer to London.

These years had left their mark on Leila. Her beauty was not materially lessened, but

the sparkling vivacity, the bright mobility of feature that had been her great charm, had vanished. On her pensive brow, in the depths of her dark eyes, one read a tale of suffering endured that even to strangers appealed to their sympathies. The bright, careless, capricious girl of the commencement of our tale had for ever vanished; she was a saddened remorseful woman, who felt she could never atone sufficiently for that youthful error that entailed such grievous consequences.

But sorrow and suffering had done for Leila what perhaps prosperity could not have achieved. They had purified and ennobled her whole nature. She spent her days in caring for others, in succouring all within her reach, who were in distress of any kind; in the little country village in which they lived, and for miles round, her name was never mentioned without a blessing.

Of Clinton Treherne she had seen nothing for years. Shortly after poor Horace's death, he had accepted a government appointment abroad, and he had been absent until now. Before his quitting England they had met once, but no word of their mutual love had passed between them. He had just resigned his post, and only this morning, when we gather up the final threads of our story, Leila had received a letter from him informing her of his arrival in town, and of his intended visit to her and her mother.

She sat now in the shady garden with the letter still in her hand, studying the firm, decided characters, feeling her pulses thrill at the thought of meeting him again.

"But that must never be," she murmured, as she pressed her hand to her tired eyes. "I have no right to be happy. And who knows, perhaps he does not wish it now."

The sound of footsteps fall on her ears. Looking up, she saw Clinton Treherne making his way across the lawn. A; she rose to her feet to greet him, the memory of another summer's day, long years ago, rushed over her, the day when he had come to seek her, and had asked her so unexpectedly to be his wife.

The next moment their hands had met, and each was studying in silence the changes these years had made in the other. Treherne was in what, with men, is called their prime, but there were deep lines in his face, and a sprinkling of grey in his dark hair, that should belong to a man more advanced in years. His eyes, with their look of settled melancholy, dwelt tenderly on the chastened beauty of Leila's face, that face which through all these weary years, had never been absent from his thoughts.

He was the first to break the silence, and as his low, soft tones fell on her ear she felt herself transported back to days gone by.

"Are you glad to see me, Leila?"

"You know how glad," she answered, in a voice barely above a whisper.

He put his arm round her and drew her back to the seat she had just vacated. He loved her then still, for a minute the delicious thrill of delight effaced all other thoughts.

"Leila," he went on, softly; "do you know what I have come for?"

She hid her face in her hands. "Oh, Clinton, it can never be; you must not tempt me. I should feel as though I had compassed his death to win my own happiness."

"Heaven forgive me if I do wrong," he answered; "but I cannot think it is so. One life has been sacrificed; is not that enough?"

She made no answer, but her whole frame shook with suppressed sobs.

"Leila, my dearest," he went on; "these years of suffering, of sorrow, will surely be accepted as atonement for the wrong you unwittingly did. Do you think he would wish his rash act to cloud your whole life? I am sure, could he speak to you, he would bid you come to me. Leila, shall we mourn him less together than apart?"

She does not withstand his persuasions, her heart is pleading too strongly in his favour.

Her head sinks on his shoulder and their lips meet in one long, lingering kiss.

My story is ended. In their mutual love and trust, they were happy, but over their lives there rests a shadow that not even that love can wholly dissipate.

[THE END.]

THE FAIR ELAINE.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ARLEY'S ILLNESS.

"I fear you will think me very foolish," Arley said, trying to smile through her tears; "but indeed I am very anxious to go home."

"No, dear heart, I've been homesick myself afore now," Mrs. Collins responded, sympathetically.

"But how happens it that you're alone in this strange country—that you've no one to go with ye to take care of ye?" she added, with a keen glance into the fair flushed face.

"I do not like to tell you about it here," Arley replied, looking furtively around, as if she feared some one might be within hearing. "Could you come to my lodgings some time to-morrow or next day? Then I will tell you more about how I am situated, and why I am so anxious to secure an escort back to England."

Yes, Mrs. Collins said, she would come to-morrow, and Arley gave her the address; then, thanking her for her kindness, she took leave of them both and returned to her lodgings quite content with her day's work, even though she had failed to see the consul.

On entering her room, however, she was dismayed at the state in which she found it. She knew that she had left it in perfect order when she went out. Now her closet door stood wide open, and her clothing appeared to have been tossed about. Her writing-desk was also open, and her papers scattered about in confusion. Her trunk, likewise, had been tampered with, for its contents had been roughly turned over and left in a disordered state.

But after a hasty glance at these things she turned to her dressing-case, a look of great anxiety on her face. The upper drawer was partially drawn out, but she knew that she had been careful to lock it, and put the key in her purse before going out.

With a cry of dismay, she sprang forward, drew it further out, and looked into it.

Her face, and even her lips, turned ghastly pale as she did so; her eyes stared widely at a vacant spot within it for a moment; then with a despairing moan she dropped upon her knees, leaned her head against the drawer, sobbing as if her heart were broken.

Her jewel-box was gone, and it contained all that she had except what she had worn that morning.

Her diamonds were of course more valuable than anything else, and she had saved them by wearing them; but there were many things which she had prized very highly in the cabinet, and it was very trying to have them stolen from her thus.

Still, she could have borne even this with fortitude but for one thing; in one of the compartments, pinned to the velvet cushion, there was the hundred-pound note which Miss McAllister had given her on her wedding-day, and which she had carefully preserved through everything for a case of emergency.

Now all her hopes were blasted; for without funds what could she do? She could not go home without money to pay her passage; she could not live there, or anywhere, without it. Her purse was nearly empty. She did not know how long she might find employment at the picture-shop; and, besides, it would take her so long—such a weary while, to earn enough to go home.

For a time she was nearly wild over her loss, and did not know what to do about it.

She dared not tell her landlady that she had been robbed, lest she might suspect her poverty and refuse to allow her to stay there. She could not inform the police, for she could not speak the language, and she had no faith to believe that she should recover her property if she made her case known, while it might only involve her in debt and deeper trouble.

Philip could not help her peculiarly, and it was probable that he would not if he could, after the step which she had taken the previous day.

What made her start so suddenly at the thought of her husband, and the colour flame hotly over her whole face?

Could it be possible that he would be guilty of so dastardly a deed as to creep into her room and rob her thus?

The thought came to her like a shock, and perhaps she would not have suspected him if she had not told him that she would sell her jewels to get money to go home. Remembering this made her feel that perhaps she had put a temptation in his way, which, in his embarrassing situation, he had not been able to resist. But after a moment she put the thought from her—she would not believe anything so dreadful of him, even though his treatment of her had been so unmanly.

But it was a terrible blow to her, whoever was the thief, for there was no going home now until she had earned the money, or unless—she should sell her diamonds.

She could not bear to do that, for they had been the last gift of Dr. McAllister to her before his death, and they seemed almost sacred to her.

Wretched as she was she resolved to lose no time in taking care of them, lest they also should be stolen from her; so, struggling for calmness, she undressed them from her ears and throat, and sewed them securely into the waist of a dress, stitched them in over the top of whalebones, thinking that no one would ever suspect such a hiding-place for them.

This done, she strove to busy herself over her drawings, for she must make the most of her time now; but she was so nervous and trembling that she could scarcely hold her pencils. She started, and grew hot and cold at every sound—she imagined that she heard steps creeping up the stairs and pausing at her door; she would listen with painful intently, until every nerve quaked with fear, then bursting into a passion of tears, weep until she had no strength to cry more.

Thus the day and most of the night was spent, and morning found her a pitiable object indeed—burning with fever, and wild with delirium.

When her landlady brought up her breakfast she knocked, but no one came to open the door, though she could hear Arley talking in a rapid, unnatural way within her room.

She listened a few moments, and being convinced that something was wrong, she tried the door.

It was fastened, as she expected; but being of a resolute nature, she was not long in forcing an entrance, and found Arley in a high fever, and in an almost uncontrollable state of excitement.

She did what she could for her temporary relief, and then sent for a physician.

When he came and made an examination of his patient he looked very grave, and pronounced her very ill. He prescribed for her; waited an hour to see what effect his medicines would have, and as she became somewhat more quiet, he finally went away, promising, however, to come in again later in the day.

Afternoon brought Jane Collins, who, by showing the address which Arley had given her, and by signs, managed to make her errand known.

The landlady saw at once that she was English, although belonging to an entirely different class from that of her lodger, and she was only too glad to conduct her upstairs to the sick girl's room.

The good woman was dismayed upon finding her in such a condition, and saw at once that

all hope of her returning to England with her in the *Rocket* was at an end—she knew that she was booked for a long and tedious illness.

She at once removed her bonnet and shawl, and by signs made the woman of the house to understand that she wanted water and towels.

She was a kind-hearted creature, and comprehended at once that Jane wanted to give the sick girl a bath, and hastened to bring everything necessary.

Then with a gentleness which one would scarcely have thought she was capable she sponged the sufferer, who, though she did not recognize her, seemed to be grateful for the attention, and grew gradually quieter under the soothing process, until, when she had finished and covered her with fresh linen, which she had asked to have brought for the bed, Arley dropped into a deep, quiet sleep.

Jane then donned her bonnet and shawl again, and hastened back to her own humble lodgings to tell John about the sad state in which she had found the "beautiful young leddy," and to get his consent for her to remain with her until she should be better, or as long as she could before the sailing of the *Rocket*.

Honest John Collins's tender heart went out to the lovely girl lying so ill and desolate among strangers, and he bade his wife go back and stay with her if she wished.

She did wish, and hastily putting together a few necessary articles in a bundle she returned to her post in the sick-room.

There was much to try the good woman's patience in assuming this responsibility, for of course she could not understand a word of the strange physician's directions, although she liked his appearance and treatment of Arley.

The only way she could ascertain how to give his medicine was by making him point out on Arley's watch—which she had found under her pillow and immediately taken possession of—the hours when they were to be administered.

For four days the poor girl was fearfully ill, and utterly unconscious of everything that transpired about her.

But good Jane Collins was indefatigable, sparing herself in no way, while she was as tender and motherly as if she had been the mother of a dozen children, instead of a lone woman without one in the world to love.

On the fifth day Arley seemed somewhat more comfortable, and began to have lucid intervals.

The next day her mind was quite clear, and she recognized her attendant with evident pleasure.

"How came you here?" she asked, "Ye were ill, and John said I might come to take care of ye," Jane answered, her face beaming to hear her speak naturally once more.

"How good it is of you!" Arley said, grasping the woman's rough hand, and clinging to it with what strength she had.

"Have I been very ill?" she asked, after a minute.

"Yes, miss, very ill, and ye ain't none too well now," Jane returned, regarding her somewhat anxiously.

"Do you think I shall be sick long?" the young girl questioned, wistfully.

"I hope ye're a trifle better this mornin', but it'll take quite a time yet for ye to get up where ye was afore."

Arley sighed heavily at this.

"What day is it?" she asked.

"Monday, miss."

"Monday!" with a startled look. "It was Tuesday that I saw you at the consul's. It must be nearly time to sail!"

Her eyes were growing very bright, and the fever flush began to mount hotly in her cheeks again.

"Yes; the *Rocket* sails Wednesday at noon."

Jane did not know what else to say.

"And I can't go," Arley wailed, with a hysterical sob.

"Hush, dearie! ye'll do yerself mischief if ye get to cryin'," the woman said, soothingly

while she smoothed the pretty brown head with her hard hand as tenderly as a mother would have done.

"But I did so want to go home," Arley replied with quivering lips.

"I know—I know, and I wanted to have ye," Dame Collins responded, while a huge lump rose in her throat; "but after all, dearie, a sailin' vessel ain't no fit way for the likes o' yeto be travellin' in; it'll be much better for ye to take passage in some steamer, and go as a leddy should go."

"But I cannot go alone—I am afraid," and Arley clung to her companion almost in terror, while a feeling of desolation surged like a huge billow over her.

The woman hardly knew what to say to her. She felt that it might do her great injury if she should get excited, and yet she knew that some arrangements ought to be made for her future care. She longed to stay herself, for she felt a strange yearning for the beautiful but forlorn stranger, but she could not.

"Where do you sail from?" Arley asked, after a few moments, and struggling to be calm.

"Valencia, miss, where they are loadin' the packet with fruits and nuts as fast as ever they can; and my old man and me will have to start early Wednesday mornin' so's to be in time. It makes my old heart ache, dearie, to go and leave you behind, sick and alone, and—"

"—and—" She wanted to ask how Arley happened to be there so friendless in that strange country, but a sort of rude delicacy prevented her from putting her curiosity into words.

But the sick girl understood her, and though a vivid blush rose to her forehead, she finished the sentence for her.

"And you cannot understand how I happened to be in such a desolate condition. I will tell you; you have been so good to me that you have earned the right to know, and I am too miserable to care who knows it now," she said, wearily.

She then gave a brief account of her life since leaving London, telling how she and her husband had wandered from place to place, their comforts growing less and less because of the lack of funds, and how, after coming to Madrid, their resources had failed entirely.

Her eyes drooped and her cheeks burned with shame as she told how she had begged her husband to get something to do to improve their condition, and that when he had refused she had sought employment and earned enough to keep out of debt.

"But I could not live so," she said. "I felt that I must go home or my heart would break, and so I went that morning to the consul's to see if he could tell me of any parties about to return to England with whom I could go. I felt so elated," she added, the tears rolling over her crimson cheeks, "when you told me that I could return with you, even though it would be in a sailing vessel, and I knew that the voyage would be long and wearisome."

Then she related how, on her return from the consul's, she found that she had been robbed of her jewels and the money which she had been depending upon to pay her passage, and how she had been plunged into the depths of despair upon making the discovery.

"It was this which made me ill," she said; "it gave me such a shock, and I grew so nervous and excited over my loss that it made me ill," and Jane saw that excitement was fast hurrying her toward the verge of delirium again.

"Never mind the loss of the money, dearie," she said, soothingly. "It was a good deal to lose, I own, and the scamp who took it'll get his pay yet, I promise ye; but Jane Collins hasn't the heart to see ye take on like this for the matter of a few pounds; ye shan't want for anything that a little money can buy. John and me'll let you have whatever ye need, and when ye get back to the old country, and the good aunt that ye've been telling me about, ye can make it all right with me again, if ye like."

Arley was greatly comforted by this, and began to grow calmer at once.

"What should I have done if it had not been for you?" she said, gratefully.

"The Lord always takes care of his helpless ones, and if He hadn't sent me 'twould have been some one else," Jane responded, with simple faith.

"But where is this?"—"villin," she was going to ask, but changed her mind before the obnoxious word was spoken, and substituted—"man, who has used ye so badly?"

Arley gave the street and number where she and Philip had lived; then after thinking a moment, she asked:

"As you must go so soon, and there will be no one but strangers to care for me, perhaps it will be best to send word to my husband regarding my condition, and it may be when he sees how I am he will be willing to exert himself to take care of me."

Jane Collins's face lighted at this proposal. She thought it would be the best, the only thing to do, and offered to go at once in search of the recreant husband.

Arley thanked her and consented, and Jane immediately started out upon her errand.

She easily found the place to which she had been directed, and presented to the landlord, who answered her summons, Mr. Paxton's name, which Arley had written upon a card for her.

She was made to understand that Mr. Paxton was not there—that the gentleman and his wife had both gone, and they did not know whither.

The fact of the case was, that when Philip found that his wife was determined to go, he, too, left on the same day, and their landlord believed that they had gone together to some other place.

It was with a heavy heart that Jane Collins returned to poor Arley with this intelligence, for she well knew how critical her condition was, and what a terrible thing it would be to leave her in that strange city alone and so very ill.

"If it wasn't for John I'd stay," she murmured to herself, with a troubled face, "but I've only him in all the world, and I can't let him go without me."

And the faithful creature was much distressed by her desire to act the part of the good Samaritan to the fair young invalid, while her strong affection for her husband could not endure a long separation from him.

Arley clung to her almost in terror upon learning how fruitless her errand had been.

"What shall I do? How can I bear to let you leave me?" she cried, in despair. "I can trust you—you are good and kind, I know, by your face, while I feel as if I was in a den of thieves. I believe I shall surely die if I am left here alone."

She became so excited that Jane grew alarmed, but she had not one word of comfort to offer, for it was indeed a hard case; and she could only gather her in her arms, and try to soothe her as she would have soothed a child.

The doctor came in during this scene, and shook his head with great displeasure as he saw the condition which his patient was in, and he jabbered as fast as his tongue could fly, while, of course, neither of his hearers could understand a word that he said.

At length, as if inspired by some happy thought, Arley raised her head from Jane Collins's shoulder, and addressed him in French.

To her delight he responded at once and with a very good accent, and the look of care and misery began to fade out somewhat from her face.

If she could only make herself understood her situation would not be quite so uncomfortable; and when she explained it to Jane she also looked much relieved.

Arley told the doctor that her kind friend would be obliged to leave her in a day or two, and that they were both much troubled on account of the separation.

But he spoke very kindly, telling her not to be troubled; he would make her his special charge, and she should have every care that she needed; and it was not long before he had the satisfaction of seeing her sink back upon her pillow with a sigh of relief, and an actual smile—though a tremulous one—on her lips, at his assurance.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A WICKED DEED.

"DEARIE, it breaks my heart to go and leave ye like this! If it wasn't that my old man and me have never been parted for the thirty years we've lived together, and it turns me cold and sick to think of it at this late day, I'd never leave ye in this knavish country. But take heart, miss; it isn't so bad now that ye can talk with the doctor, and he'll do everything he can for ye, and get ye everything ye need. I've taken care of that, and I believe he's half human, if he has got Spanish blood in him. And now, dearie, I must now say good-bye to ye. John is waitin' below for me, and he's that sorry for ye that he couldn't sleep, but talked half the night about ye. He told me to give ye this—it's twenty-five pounds—and he hopes it'll do ye until ye can hear from the good aunt, and the doctor's bill is paid up to now. Don't fret, dearie, for the Lord will hold ye in the hollow of His hand."

Thus spoke honest Jane Collins as she took leave of Arley late on Tuesday evening, for she was to leave Madrid for Valencia early in the morning.

As she finished she crowded a roll of Spanish gold pieces into the sick girl's feverish hand.

Poor Arley clung to her as if she could not let her go, while the tears rained over her wan face.

"You have been such a kind friend to me," she said, between her sobs. "I shall never forget it; I can never repay it—the kindness I mean. The money, of course, you shall have back. But stay," she added, with sudden thought; "I have some diamonds; I wore them the day that I first met you. One of them is worth much more than the amount which you have given me, and you shall have it for security and then, if anything happens that I do—not live to go home"—this with a little shiver—"you will lose nothing."

"Tut, tut, miss; don't talk like that. Ye're young, and ye'll be all right in a little while, and I shall yet see ye back, hale and hearty, in 'merrie England.' But as for the diamonds, miss"—and the good woman's face flashed a deep crimson—"Jane Collins isn't that close that she'd wish to take the trinkets that were given to ye by some one who loved ye and who ye loved, maybe. But hush, dearie!" she added, in a whisper; "keep 'em close, keep 'em close, or somebody will be stealin' 'em, as they did the other things."

"But—but, if anything happens to me, somebody else will get them anyway, I'm afraid, and it would be too cruel for you to lose all your hard-earned money," Arley replied.

She did love her diamonds for their giver's sake, but she did not feel right to receive so much kindness from these kind-hearted strangers without remunerating them in some way; and she knew well enough that if she should die there in that foreign land, everything that she had would be quickly appropriated by the cunning Spaniards, and Jane Collins would never get anything for her goodness.

"Nothing ain't goin' to happen to ye, dearie; I tell ye ye're goin' to get well, and I couldn't take the diamonds. When ye come back well and hearty and have plenty once more, then ye can pay me if ye want to, but if ye can't—well, it's only gone into the Lord's treasury, and He'll take care of it," and the good woman's look of trust was something wonderful to behold.

"I shall love you all my life," Arley said, chokingly.

Jane Collins's face flashed with pleasure, though tears rolled down her ruddy cheeks.

"Love is better than gold," she remarked, sententiously; "anybody can earn money, but barrin' my good man, 'tis a long day since any one told Jane Collins that she were loved. I don't often get soft like this," she added, swallowing a sob, "but if ye don't mind, miss, I would just like to kiss ye once on the cheek and then say good-bye."

Arley put up her arms, and, drawing the woman's face down to her, kissed her heartily.

At that moment, when she was so wretched and desolate, the homely, honest face of Jane Collins seemed the most beautiful and trustworthy countenance in the world to her.

But when at length the last word was said and she had gone with reluctant feet from the place, poor Arley felt as if she had not a friend left in the world.

She was worse that night, of course, after all this excitement, and the physician was much disturbed about her, while for more than a week afterwards there was a doubt in his mind whether she would ever be any better.

She was delicious most of the time, babbling of home, grandpapa, auntie, Lady Elaine, and Hazelmere, in the most confused manner imaginable.

But at length she began slowly to mend; the fever abated a little every day until she had none, and then there was a long struggle with weakness and languor.

As soon as she began to realize that she was really better, however—when the doctor told her that if she would only have courage and patience she would be all right again in time—she took heart and resolved that she would get well with all possible speed.

One night, some three weeks after this, the little physician trotted down the stairs after leaving her room, a satisfied smile on his dark face.

He had been called from the city early in the morning to a patient at some distance, and so had been unable to visit her until evening; but he had been much pleased to find her greatly improved and actually sitting up with a pretty white wrapper on, and the suspicion of coming colour in her cheeks.

He laughingly told her that she would be regarding him as an intruder in a few days if she progressed at that rate, for his visits would be needless.

As he came out in the street he almost ran against a man who appeared to be lounging about the door.

"What do you want?" he demanded, curiously, and eyeing him suspiciously.

"There is an English lady ill within?" the stranger said questioningly.

"Yes," was the brief response of the physician, who saw that his interlocutor was a foreigner and evidently English also, although he spoke the language of Spain very correctly.

"Is—*is* she better?"

"Yes," again briefly.

"Will she get well?"

"She is very nearly well now, but still weak, of course."

The stranger turned his head quickly, but not before the keen eyes of the doctor had caught the look of disappointment which flashed from his eyes.

"The lady is a stranger, perhaps—would it be proper for one of her own countrymen to offer sympathy and assistance?"

This was asked with a sort of nervous hesitancy.

"Sympathy is well—assistance in a time of need is better; but thanks, *senor*—she has a friend who can do for her all that she needs at present," and with a stiff little bow the suspicious doctor passed him and went his way.

Philip Paxton—for it was he—glared after him, a flash of hatred in his eyes.

He had heard of Arley's illness almost immediately, and had been in the habit of prowling about her lodging and interviewing the servants regarding her condition.

They had given him very unfavourable accounts, enjoying, as their class always do, something exciting to talk about, and he had been led to believe that she would not recover.

It was a shock to him now, therefore, to be told that she was getting well, for, horrible as it seems, he had actually hoped that she would die, so that he could carry out a cunning scheme which of late had been developed in his brain.

With Arley out of the way, he could go back and win the Lady Elaine—at least, this was the thought that had possessed him ever since reading of Wil Hamilton's death.

Philip Paxton of to-day did not much resemble, morally, the industrious, rising young barrister whom we first saw in his chambers, reading that hearty letter from his friend at Hazelmere.

Until then he had been an honourable, upright man, determined to make his mark in the world, and bidding fair to do so, by his own talents and exertions. But a great temptation had been placed in his way; the thought that he could, perhaps, win both fortune and position more easily than to dig and delve for them for years, had suddenly taken possession of him, and he had weakly yielded to it, and betrayed the confidence of his friend.

This was the first step in the wrong direction, and it was easier to take the second; thus, when disappointment and business reverses met him instead of success, it seemed as if all the antagonism of his nature had been aroused, and from that time he had appeared to become reckless of his manhood or honour, speeding at a headlong rate along a downward path.

As we have said, he left his lodgings the same day that Arley went away, and had also gone into humbler quarters; while, a few days later, he might have been seen in a gambling den, watching, with wild eyes and haggard face, the turn of the wheel which would either make him a beggar or fill his purse with gold.

He won; and with a hoarse cry of joy he swept the pile of glittering coins towards him, and then, in spite of the enticing invitation of the banker to "try his luck again," cramming them into his pocket, he staggered from the place as if intoxicated with his good fortune (?).

The next day found him in another den of the same kind—he was too cunning to try twice in the same place—and again he won.

"That will do," he muttered; "it's enough to give me quite a start, and I'll stop while I am safe," and buttoning his coat close over his hoard, he stalked from the place, wholly unmindful of the dark looks of the disappointed banker.

He had told Arley, on that morning when she had paid their board out of her own earnings, that he had no money.

Whence then came the gold that he had staked at the gaming-table, and that had enabled him to win more?

As soon as Arley was able to get out she went once more to the picture shop where she had sold her pictures, to ascertain if she could still continue to supply sketches there.

The proprietor was shocked at the change in her, and she did indeed look more like some frail, beautiful spirit than an earthly being; but he told her that he would take all the work that she could do.

She was not really able yet to apply herself closely to anything, but her doctor's and landlady's bills had made sad inroads upon her twenty-five pounds—Jane Collins's loan—and it would take some time to earn sufficient to pay her passage home; therefore she felt obliged to make the most of what strength she had.

She wrote a letter one day to Miss McAllister, telling her something of her troubles and illness, and asking her to send money for her expenses to England, but upon reading it over she instantly tore it up, while her face was one sheet of scarlet.

"I cannot write it; the degradation is

greater than I can bear," she cried, in a proud, hard tone. "I will earn my own passage-money, and then I will go back and tell her all about it; with my arms about her neck and my face hidden on her shoulder, I could whisper it into her ear, but to write it, and spell out every word I cannot," and a shiver of repulsion shook her from head to foot.

Every day she grew stronger—every day she was able to draw a little more, though the doctor, coming in occasionally to see how she progressed, and looking over her shoulder at her dainty work, muttered, with a scowl of disapprobation, that he should have her again on his hands if she did not take care.

Arley raised her lovely dark eyes to his face, and he saw the terrified expression in them.

"Will it make me ill again?" Please don't tell me so, for I must work—I must go home."

He knew that she had been robbed—she had confided so much to him—and that she would have to earn money before she could return to her friends, and he had favoured her all he could in his charges. He wished now, as he saw the desperate homesickness in her eyes, that he had taken nothing from her, and so he had not the heart to tell her that she must not work—indeed, he began to think that if deprived of employment she might be in even more serious danger of another illness.

"Well, well, be moderate, then, *senora*. Be careful and not apply yourself too closely," he said; and so her work went on.

Arley wondered where Philip could be all this time. She wondered if he knew what she had been suffering during the last six weeks. If he had known, and been there in the same city with her, he was certainly very unfeeling and cruel not to come to her, and at least offer her a word of sympathy in her bitter extremity.

A month passed, the passage-money was almost earned, and Arley had decided to sail on a certain steamer which would leave for England within the coming fortnight, when, one morning, a servant brought an official-looking document to her door.

With a look of wonder upon her face, which was growing wondrously lovely every day now—sickness and sorrow had given it a sort of refined beauty such as it had never possessed before—she took the strange-looking missive and broke the seals.

She saw at a glance that it was written in French, therefore whoever had sent it knew that she was not familiar with Spanish.

She began to read it, though the formalities and legal terms puzzled her, but she kept on, until at last a low cry of horror burst from her. Her eyes dilated with pain, her cheeks faded to the hue of death, and she trembled so that the paper rattled in her hands.

A blur seemed to obscure her sight, so that the words ran together until she could not read them. She passed her hand across her eyes to dispel it, and read again those stiff, formal sentences which had agitated her so deeply.

Then, as she comprehended their full meaning, a vivid crimson mounted to her brow, her nostrils dilated, her lips curled with mingled scorn and bitterness.

Philip Paxton had applied to the court of Madrid for a divorce from his wife, Arletta Paxton, and the paper stated two reasons for this—an illegal marriage and subsequent desertion, and she was notified to appear on a certain day to defend her case.

Had it come to this, that with all her other troubles she must be a divorced wife?

What was the man, who had won her with such fair, fond words—who had vowed fidelity, and sworn to love, honour, and care for her until death should part them—made of, that he could contemplate this fearful thing?

"How could I have been so mistaken in him?" she muttered, bitterly. "How could any one so utterly false and craven ever have possessed the power to so deceive and allure me?"

The idea of this divorce seemed like the last bitter drop in her cup, though she knew she

had long been learning to feel a certain contempt for her husband. He had forfeited her respect in many ways, but, for all that, she would have tried to be a faithful wife to him had he allowed her to be such. She would have remained with him, cared for his comfort, and helped him in every way that was possible, if he would, in return, have given her an honourable support; but she could not—she would not—live under accumulating debt.

But why should he claim that their marriage was illegal?

This charge surprised her.

How could their marriage be illegal when it had been performed in the presence of so many witnesses, and with all the necessary forms and ceremonies?

Then, like a flash, it came to her that she had been married under a name to which she had no right. She was not Arletta Wentworth, nor Arletta anything else. The name that she was known by was not hers; it was only retained for convenience, since she must be called something.

This then was probably the reason why he had not come near her while she was so ill; he had been scheming to do this wicked thing.

"Doubtless, she thought, bitterly, "he had wished she might die and save him all this trouble; but since she did not, he was going to take this way to shirk all responsibility of his relations towards her."

(To be continued.)

THE WOMEN OF VIENNA.

The education of girls in Vienna is somewhat peculiar and perhaps worthy of note, writes a correspondent of that city. Up to fifteen years of age they are kept at their studies, but are not deprived of society. They dress very simply, rarely wearing a silk gown until the day they leave the schoolroom for the ball-room.

After they leave school they go through a year's, or even two years', teaching in the pantry and in the kitchen under some member of the family, or even, in some cases, in another family under trained cooks. They may never be required to cook a dinner, but they are thus rendered independent of cooks and servants, as they learn how to do everything themselves long before they begin housekeeping on their own account.

When married they are most affectionate wives and mothers.

An Austrian lady, in fact, is as accomplished and learned as an English governess, as good a housekeeper and cook as a German, as witty and vivacious in society as a Parisian, as passionate as an Italian and as handsome as an American, some of the most beautiful women in Europe being found in Vienna.

Germans and also Austrians are celebrated for their stocks of linen. Here, as soon as a girl is born, the weaving of her linen is begun, and every year a piece or a certain number of yards is set aside for her *trousseau*, ready for her marriage. Grandmothers, on their side, are not idle.

They pass their time knitting for their grandchildren, supplying not only their present wants, but also laying aside for the future, a dozen dozens of stockings of every kind being the usual number of any bride's *trousseau*, and some of these knitted stockings are as fine as the finest woven ones.

An Austrian girl or lady is never, I may say, seen without some kind work in her hand. Ladies work even in society. They do nothing at balls, of course, but I think that is the only exception to the rule.

When several labour thus in a family, one reads aloud while the others work, and thus they keep abreast of all the newest literature of the day.

Not a minute of their day is lost, and, in Solomon's words they find a time for everything—for work, housekeeping, visiting, learning, balls, amusement, and even for love.

A HEART TO LET.

"There!" said Miss Wilhelmina. I think I've got it black enough now!"

Miss Wilhelmina had been wrestling with pen and ink. Not that she was a literary lady—that was far from being the case.

The effusion upon which she was so hard at work was neither more nor less than a big "To Let," printed on the back of a sheet of her deceased father's sermon-paper, and she viewed it with solemn satisfaction.

"To Let—Apply Within."

"I won't pay any agents' fees," said she, "nor I won't pay good, hard money for a notice that I can print myself. I've economised all my life, and I'm not going to leave off now. Beryl, I say?"

In answer to the last word, spoken in quick, arbitrary accents, a bright-eyed girl of seventeen came running in, wiping her dimpled hands on a frilled apron. Her cheeks were flushed with household exercise, her shining brown hair was coiled in a lustrous braid at the back of her head, and her long-lashed hazel eyes sparkled like diamonds.

"What is it, aunty?" said Beryl Brand.

"Get the paste-pot and a brush," said Miss Wilhelmina "and put up this 'To Let!'"

Beryl looked first at her aunt, and then at the fat, black-lettered sign, in dismay.

"Aunt," said she, "are you going to move?"

"Yes," said Miss Wilhelmina, "I've made up my mind to give up housekeeping."

"Where are we going, aunt?"

"I'm going to Leicestershire," said Miss Wilhelmina, "to keep house for Cousin Fred, whose wife Lily is feeble, and can't keep an eye to things."

Beryl coloured vividly.

"But Aunt Wilhelmina," said she, "it was me that Cousin Fred wrote for, to come and help Lily, and be a companion to the girls."

"Yes, I know," said Wilhelmina, with the indifference of utter selfishness. "But Fred hadn't any idea how young and inexperienced you are, and I've wrote to him that I will come there, if he'll pay me liberal wages and give me the complete management of everything."

"But, Aunt Wilhelmina—"

"Well?"

"What is to become of me?" pleaded poor Beryl.

"Some people are always thinking of themselves!" said Miss Wilhelmina sharply.

"Why, what should become of you? You can get a place with Mrs. Somerset in the millinery business; or you can go out as companion. And now I think of it, it was only yesterday I saw in the daily paper that Lyon and Stubb wanted a dozen smart young women to stand behind the counter. There are always plenty of things for a woman to do if only she has a little ambition and energy. And now don't stand there, looking as if your senses were all flying up the chimney, but bustle out and put up that notice as sharp as possible, for it's a nice day, and all the house-hunters will be out."

Beryl obeyed, with an indescribable feeling, as if the whole world were turning itself upside down.

And as she leaned over the iron rail of the steps, fastening the big "To Let" against the mildewed brick wall, a certain scent of green-tinged grass and opening dandelions saluted her senses, while the warble of a prisoned thrush, in a cage across the street, reminded her of a visit she had once made, years and years ago, to this same Cousin Fred up in Leicestershire.

The tears came, unbidden, into Beryl's eyes. "Oh, how delightful it would be to live in the real country!" she said to herself. "And I know I could make myself useful at Cousin Fred's. But if Aunt Wilhelmina is going herself, there is an end of the matter."

For Beryl was too well used to her aunt's overbearing egotism even to attempt a struggle against it.

All her life long she had been the victim of Aunt Wilhelmina's selfishness. It was too late for any rebellion now.

And then Wilhelmina went up to her room to pack her trunk for Cousin Fred, while Beryl returned to her dish-washing and ironing.

All day long the house was besieged with an eager throng of househunters. All day long Beryl marshalled them over the premises with untiring patience, answering more questions than any catechism could contain, bearing patiently with covert insult, and keeping up a cheerful front, while every bone in her poor little body ached with weariness.

And Aunt Wilhelmina cried,—

"Tired! Why, what on earth have you done to be tired!"

On the afternoon of the second day, Miss Wilhelmina shouted shrilly down the back staircase to her niece.

"Beryl! Beryl! Here comes Mr. Wedderburn, the rich old jeweller from Regent-street. He's looked at the 'To Let.' He's coming in. Put an extra ten pounds a-year on the rent if he's to take it."

"He is not so very old, Aunt Wilhelmina," said Beryl, hurriedly flinging off her kitchen-apron and hastening up the stairs.

Aunt Wilhelmina uttered a resounding sniff.

"He's no chicken," said she.

Beryl smiled to herself. She had not been unobservant of all the wiles that her aunt had put forth to captivate this same Mr. Wedderburn. She had not forgotten that Wilhelmina had not spoken to her for a week, the last time Mr. Wedderburn had walked home from church with her (Beryl) instead of with her aunt.

In her secret heart she liked and respected the stalwart, middle-aged man, who had always mingled so chivalrous a courtesy in his manner toward her, poor dependent though she was upon Aunt Wilhelmina's grudgingly-extended charity.

Mr. Wedderburn came in, kindly shaking hands with Beryl as he did so.

"I see your house is to let," said he.

"Yes," answered Beryl.

While from the head of the stairs Aunt Wilhelmina disposed herself to listen.

"I'm glad that girl didn't shut the front door," said she.

"I am intending to change my local habitation," observed Mr. Wedderburn.

"Are you?" said Beryl. "Perhaps you would like this house?"

"No," said Mr. Wedderburn, "I don't think I care about the house."

"Rude old monster!" muttered Aunt Wilhelmina.

"My aunt is going to Leicestershire," said Beryl.

"Is she, indeed?" uttered Mr. Wedderburn. "I am thinking of going to the country too!"

"I wish I'd gone to the door myself," said Wilhelmina to herself. "I know I could have coaxed him to come to Leicestershire."

"The fact is," added Mr. Wedderburn, "I am tired of London, Miss Beryl. I have made up my mind to live among the daisies and buttercups."

"Gracious me!" mused Miss Wilhelmina, "I'll put on my best 'front' directly, and come down. I believe the man has been madly in love with me all along, and now he has decided to unite our destinies!"

And away she scuffled in her old carpet slippers to beautify herself as expeditiously as possible.

"And—you will excuse the interest of an old friend, Miss Beryl," kindly added Mr. Wedderburn, "but what is to be your fate?"

"I don't know," said Beryl, sadly. "I should like to go to Leicestershire too, but Aunt Wilhelmina, thinks I had better stay here and be a shop-girl!"

"What do you think about it?" said Mr. Wedderburn.

Beryl's dark-fringed eyelids drooped.

"I have no choice," said she.

He gazed kindly at her; her heart began to throb a pulse or so faster than its usual wont.

What pleasant, blue-grey eyes he had! What a frank, smiling mouth!

"Do you like the country?" said he. "I don't know," faltered Beryl. "I have seen so little of it. But whenever I think of Heaven it seems to me it must be beautiful green meadows, with violets opening in the grass."

He leaned forward and took her hand.

"Beryl," he said, gently, "your words encourage me still more in the mission upon which I came. I have bought an old manor-house in Kent, with a farm and plenty of green trees. Will you go thither with me, Beryl, and be the Eve to my little Paradise? Will you marry a man who, although he is close on forty, is still young at heart, and who will try his best to make you happy?"

And without a shade of coquetry, or a particle of hesitation, Beryl joyfully answered,—"Yes!"

"My own sweet girl!" he exclaimed, drawing her close to him. "You are quite sure that you can learn to love me?"

"I—I don't know," murmured Beryl. "But I think—nay, I am certain—that I love you now!"

At that very moment the door opened with a long, creaking groan, and in tripped Aunt Wilhelmina, with her newest front of curls and her Sunday smile. She started back with an exclamation.

"Eh!" said she, in some embarrassment.

"Do not be alarmed, Miss Wilhelmina," said Mr. Wedderburn, resolutely retaining the hand that Beryl would fain have drawn away. "This young lady has promised to be my wife, and when you go to Leicester she will accompany me to my manor house in Kent."

"I hope you won't be vexed, Aunt Wilhelmina," said Beryl, half-expecting to be scolded, as of yore.

The fortitude of woman is proverbial, and although the report of a cannon could not have electrified Miss Wilhelmina Bruce any more than did this occurrence, she rallied promptly.

"I—I'm sure I congratulate you!" said she, with a little gasp.

The house was left that afternoon to a widow who wanted to take a few genteel boarders.

Beryl was married the next week, and went to a superb, old mansion, which seemed like a palace to her unsophisticated eyes.

And Aunt Wilhelmina sorrowfully took her way to Leicester.

"I'm afraid I've mismanaged matters," said she, if I'd sent Beryl to Cousin Fred's at once, perhaps Mr. Wedderburn would have proposed to me!"

And even this dubious "perhaps" was a comfort to poor Aunt Wilhelmina, who still has a "Heart to Let." H. F. G.

FACETIÆ.

Husband: "No, my wife doesn't sport many jewels, but there is one kind of gems of which she has a full supply." Friend: "What is that?" Husband: "Stratagems."

"So you think your son smokes, Mrs. Jones?" "I'm sure of it, Mrs. Brown. I've found pieces of tobacco in his pockets." "Dear me! dear me! I'm sorry. My son has no bad habits. I never find anything in his pockets but cloves and coffee beans."

The Mind-Cure Doctress: "A person is never ill. If you think you are ill, you will feel ill; but you are not." Patient: "And if you think I pay you, you get the money; but then you don't? Oh, yes, I understand! It is very simple—delightfully simple."

"George," said a girl to her bean, the other night, "here's a piece in the paper headed 'Kismet.' What does 'Kismet' mean?" "The word must be pronounced with the 't' silent, Nettie," said George. "Why, that would be 'Kis-ma,'" said Nettie. "With the greatest pleasure," replied George. And he did.

"EVERYTHING has its use," said a philosophical professor to his class. "Of what use is a drunkard's fiery-red nose?" asked one of the pupils. "It's a lighthouse," answered the professor; "to warn us of the little water that passes underneath it, and reminds us of the shoals of appetite on which we might otherwise be wrecked."

RATHER SEVERE.—An empty oxcomb, having engrossed the attention of a company for some time with himself and his petty ailings, observed to a noted physician, who sat near him, that he could never go out without catching cold in his head. "No wonder," said the doctor; "you always go out without anything in it."

WHAT we shall hear at the watering-place this summer: Mrs. A.—"How absurdly that Mrs. B. dresses! And what airs she puts on! She says her husband used to be bank-examiner, but retired some years ago." Mr. A.—"A bank-examiner, eh? So he was. An examiner of the river bank. He was a digger, or something of that sort, I believe, at one time."

ONE OF THE OTHER.—They were lovers, and were also walking and talking together in a very affectionate manner, and she no doubt intended to pay him a compliment, but somehow or other he did not take it as such. "If you don't stop flattering me so much, I'll have to put my hands over my ears so as not to hear the compliments," he remarked. "Put your hands over your ears!" she exclaimed. "Why, your hands are not half big enough." He is not quite sure now whether it is his small hands, or large ears, of which he is to be proud.

IN the concert-room.—She: "Isn't it lovely? I never did hear such delicious music. So tender, so plaintive, so refined, so soul-possessing!" He: "I am delighted to know that you are such a music-lover; but this is nothing to what you will hear when they have got through tuning their instruments." She wishes she had not begun her ecstasies quite so soon; but poor thing; how was she to know that this wasn't a fugue, or a sonata, or gavotte, or something or other?

MR. CLEWDROP, was slowly walking down the street, when he saw one of his friends wildly striding towards him. "What is your hurry?" asked Mr. C., catching him by the coat. "Don't stop me!" yelled the other, struggling to get free; "turn me loose!" "Anything wrong?" gasped Clewdrop. "No, no! but let me go." "What are you rushing so for?" "Oh, hang it, I'm walking for a match!" "If that's all," smiled Clewdrop, feeling in his vest-pocket, "I can give you one without you walking yourself to death for a match."

A LAWYER, TOO.—A few days since a well-known lawyer, when about to start on a railway journey, after taking his seat, found, on looking over his change, that the clerk had given him a shilling too much. He accordingly returned, and informing the clerk of his mistake, handed back the money. For a moment the clerk stood speechless; then, recovering himself, exclaimed: "Please stand still one moment, sir, and let me look at you—and a lawyer, too!"

"I've had an awful discussion," said a wife, coming into the room where her husband was. "With whom?" he asked.

"With a woman over the back fence."

"What about?"

"The functions of transcendentalism; and we talked, and talked, and talked, and talked."

"Did she beat you?"

"No, sir, she didn't."

"Did you beat her?"

"Well—no—I can't say I did."

"You didn't give in, did you?"

"No, sir, I didn't."

"You didn't?"

"No, sir; I gave out, and I'm just as limp as a dish-rag after a hard day's washing."

And she hung herself over the back of a chair to recuperate.

"I DON'T see why you married Mr. Jones; he is so much older than you," said a female friend to the blushing bride. "That's just the reason," was the reply; "the contrast is so marked that it will make me look young enough to wear bangs for several years yet."

"JUST think! In Heidelberg I at one time came across a negro who was actually so black that he could be seen without a light!" "H'm! I saw a fellow one time in Mannheim who was so thin he always had to enter a room twice before he could be noticed!"

"Oh, don't propose to me now," shrieked a girl as her lover dropped on his knees and seized her hand. "Don't pop the question now," she screamed; "Don't, don't, don't. If I say yes, you will want to kiss me, and I've been eating onions."

BRIDEGROOM:—More money, madam! More money! Have you forgotten that 'my' money has bought everything you possess; the very dress you stand in? Fair bride:—"No, sir! Nor have I forgotten that your money has bought what stands in it."

MAMMA (a widow of considerable personal attractions):—"I want to tell you something, Tommy. You saw that gentleman talking to grandmamma in the other room. Well, he is going to be your new papa. Mamma is going to marry him." Tommy (recollecting something of the life that his old papa used to lead):—"D-d-does he know it yet, mamma?"

MRS. BLANK: "Ab, Jim, our—" Mr. Blank: "Oh, Mary, the news is—" Mr. Blank: "Why, who told you?" Mr. Blank: "I saw it in the paper; the bank has—" Mrs. Blank: "The bank! Why, what is that to do with—" Mr. Blank: "Why, you know the panic will—" Mrs. Blank: "Who's talking about panics? Who cares for panics? Baby's cut a tooth."

As a man who thinks he is sharp and whom his neighbours know to be dishonest was walking along the street the other day, a little boy behind him suddenly said: "Did you lose this strap, mister?" at the same time holding up a new shawl-strap. The sharp man looked around, and seeing that there was nobody near, said: "Yes, thank you," gave the boy a sixpence, and walked off, saying to himself: "It isn't often that I get left." The boy ran around the corner to a street vendor's stand, bought another new strap for threepence, and went forth to find a person who had "lost" it.

A BIT OF ADVICE.—Of the countless good stories attributed to Artemus Ward, the best one, perhaps, is one which tells of the advice which he gave to a Southern railroad conductor, soon after the war. The road was in a wretched condition, and the trains, consequently, were run at a phenomenally low rate of speed. When the conductor was punching his ticket, Artemus remarked: "Does this railway company allow passengers to give advice, if they do so in a respectful manner?" The conductor replied in gruff tones that he guessed so. "Well," Artemus went on; "it occurred to me that it would be well to detach the cowcatcher from the front of the engine and hitch it to the rear of the train; for you see we are not liable to overtake a cow, but what's to prevent a cow from strolling into this car and biting a passenger?"

A FEW mornings ago, little Tommy Barrows complained at the breakfast-table that he had suffered all night from colic.

Colonel Barrows is one of the most indulgent fathers, but is slightly sarcastic at times. "Why didn't you call me?" asked the kind parent.

"Because I didn't like to disturb you, pa," replied the considerate son.

"Next time you have colic at night just call me. If you don't I'll think hard of you; and you need not be afraid of disturbing me, for I sleep so sound you can't wake me up to save your life, so don't hesitate about calling me."

SOCIETY.

Her Majesty and Princess Beatrice left Claremont House, Esher, shortly before ten o'clock on the 30th ult., for Osborne, upon the conclusion of their visit to the Duchess of Albany, and on quitting the mansion drove in an open carriage, drawn by a couple of white ponies, through the grounds to the village, and thence by the Lower Green road to the Sandown Park Members' Station on the embankment of the main line of the London and South-Western Railway, near which, the weather being fine, a number of the residents, some in carriages, others on foot, had congregated. The Royal party was joined by Princess Margaret and Prince Arthur (the children of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall), who, in the absence of Her Majesty, had remained at Windsor Castle, whence, under the care of General Du Plat, they had been conveyed earlier in the morning to Esher. At ten o'clock the Royal train left Esher, Gosport being reached shortly before noon. The Solent was crossed in the Royal yacht. Her Majesty is expected to reside at Osborne till about the 24th of next month, when the Court will, it is believed, remove to Scotland.

The Prince and Princess of Wales on their visit to Newcastle are to be accompanied by the Princess, George and Albert Victor, and the three young Princesses. It is determined that they shall open the New Park Extension, and also open the Coble Dene Dock. Extensive preparations are being made for their visit.

The Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne visited the camp at Wimbledon on the 17th ult., and were received by Sir Henry Wilmot. The main object of their visit was to land at the Canadian camp, and this they did and the team was inspected by the Marquis of Lorne, who complimented them on their smart appearance, and wished them good fortune at the targets.

There was a great show of colours at the Prince and Princess of Wales's garden party, and where the dresses had not of themselves a hue, the white material of which they were made was looped up, or trimmed with every variety, the favourite colours being blue or red. The Princess Edward of Saxe-Weimar was in a sober but rich dress of brown, and bonnet *à la mode*. The Countess of Eglington, by her side, was in an exquisite dress of pale blue satin, most becoming to her bright fair style. Lady Garvagh's costume was of a most costly bronze velvet, and a grey bonnet, with pink roses at the side. The Countess of Essex was in a tasteful and effective toilette of gold satin and cream lace draperies. Maria Marchioness of Albany wore a rich costume of brown brocade.

The opening of the season at Ems is described as being unusually brilliant. Among the recent guests were the Emperor of Germany, the King and Queen of Greece, the Grand Duchesse of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, the King of Denmark, the Prince and Princess of Wales, &c. The Queen of Greece is a fine-looking lady, apparently not caring for the extra advantage to be obtained by dress. She is rather tall, most exquisitely built, with small hands and feet, thick black hair, large brown eyes, with eyelashes that are simply wonderful, and with a pure creamy complexion as rare as it is beautiful. She is very fond of horse-riding, and looks well in the saddle, but she looks best when with her children or with ladies. She is irresistibly lovely and charming then. It is but fair to say that she is adored by her husband and her people. She is fond of knitting lacework, such as is done in Turkey, and giving it to ladies who please her in any way.

STATISTICS.

The Lifeboat Institution has now 279 lifeboats under its charge, and no less than 1,425 lives have been saved during the past nineteen months from shipwrecks on our coasts through its instrumentality.

THE IRISH LAND ACT.—Up to June 30 last, 144,544 applications had been made to have fair rents fixed, and of these 105,058 were disposed of. The appeals numbered 17,010, of which 6,445 were disposed of.

GAME CERTIFICATES AND GUN LICENCES.—On the 31st July, by the amended Act of May, 1883, all game certificates and gun licences expired, instead of running on until April 5, as heretofore. The charge for a game licence for the whole year is 2s, and certificates to kill game for a continuous period of fourteen days may be obtained for 1s. Holders of game licences are liable to the law of trespass, and must conform to the restricted periods allowed for killing winged game.

GEMS.

NONE but the guilty can be long completely miserable.

LIFE becomes useless and insipid when we have no longer friends or enemies.

WHOEVER abolishes justice cares for no religion.

THE agitation of thought is the beginning of truth.

MONEY in your purse will credit you; wisdom in your head will adorn you; and both in your necessity will serve you.

NEVER reason from what you do not know. If you do you will soon believe what is utterly against reason.

When the sun of virtue is set, the blush of shame is the twilight. When that dies, all is darkness.

CHARACTER is not cut in marble—it is not something solid and unalterable. It is something living and changing, and may become diseased as our bodies do.

Love is the most terrible and also the most generous of the passions; it is the only one that includes in its dreams the happiness of someone else.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

RELISH FOR COLD-MEAT LUNCHEONS.—Take four ripe tomatoes, divide in halves, and fill each with a little butter and bread-crumbs, salt and pepper; add vinegar in the dish they are to be baked in. They may be either hot or cold.

LEMONS.—Lemons will keep good for months by simply putting them in a jug of buttermilk, changing the buttermilk about every three weeks. When the lemons are required for use, they should be well dried with a cloth.

FINE ICING.—Whites of four eggs well beaten, with one pound of powdered sugar, a teaspoonful of arrowroot, one of pulverized and sifted white gum-arabic, juice of one lemon. Flavour to taste.

EGG AND OYSTER OMELET.—Beat up four eggs, and season to suit the taste; chop up six large oysters; make a batter of half a cup of flour and half a pint of milk; mix the whole together, stir well, and fry slowly.

POTATO SALAD.—Take four or five cold boiled potatoes, half a small beet-root, half a small Spanish onion, plainly boiled, and about three inches of pickled cucumber. Cut them all in slices, and arrange them on a dish. Pour over them two tablespoonfuls of good sweet-oil, two tablespoonfuls of strong vinegar, salt, and a very little made mustard; mix well, and serve with hard-boiled eggs cut in slices.

MISCELLANEOUS.

MISSHAPEEN FEET.—A distinguished sculptor declares that there is not one foot in ten thousand among the fashionable people of the present day fit for an artist to copy or model. While beauty of face and delicacy of extremities have increased in the course of civilization, the shapeliness of the human foot has decreased. This deformity is all the result of a vicious fashion of foot-coverings which cramp and distort the member out of its natural proportions.

BLOCKS OF GLASS.—Glass is gradually beginning to take the place of wood and iron in the construction of bridges in England. The inventor makes blocks of glass which he hardens by a special process. In solidity it is said to leave nothing to be desired. The experiments already made have given surprising results, and the cost is below that of bridges of wood or iron. Moreover, the glass cannot be injured by insects like wood, nor rusted like iron.

INVESTIGATIONS concerning the effect of different forms of artificial illumination on the health show that the tallow candle is the most unwholesome agent and the electric light the best. The incandescent electric lamp produces only about one-thirteenth as much heat as the tallow candle, while it gives out no carbonic acid or water. One gas jet in a room is said to vitiate the air as much as six persons.

THE knowledge of the world which is so admired, but which, after all, is but a very poor attainment, is really knowledge of the defects, foibles, and weak points of men and women, and how successfully to play upon them, so as to make them subserve some particular object in view. It is an insight into character just far enough to discover its infirmities and turn them to account—an acquaintance with motives sufficient to act upon them at pleasure—a glance at a man's life and conduct sufficiently keen and piercing to reveal the best way of influencing them.

DIFFERENCES in age and in health are often, though not invariably, marked by corresponding differences in hopefulness. When the edge of pleasure is blunted, either by advanced years or impaired health, the vision of the future is darkened, and hope is checked. Yet there are notable exceptions. Some aged persons and some confirmed invalids maintain so good a degree of cheerfulness, and even happiness, that they look forward with continual hope for themselves and for others, and are often able to inspire those that are younger and healthier than themselves with the same sentiment. But, when from any cause the powers of present enjoyment are thoroughly sapped, the hopeful spirit will decline.

OWNWORK.—"To have as much work to do as one can do, and a little more," has been given as the best recipe for cheerfulness and contentment; but while readily concurring in the first part of the sentiment, we cannot but suggest that it may be, perchance, that very "little more" which is at the root of half the ill-health, pale faces, and fractious nerves of the present day. It is that last drop in the already full cup, that last straw on the already well-laden back, which is too much, just one degree too much for the sorely pressed men and women who are fighting in the fight of life, and it is that surplus from which they ought if they can to abstain. They will not see it; they will not do it. Each allows that in the case of another, that other's duty in the matter is plain enough; but for him or herself—and then follow excuses, arguments, and obstinacy not to be shaken. Everybody, it would seem, must attempt something over and above what he or she can possibly accomplish; everybody must drain a little more out of their worrying, feverish brains than can be yielded consistently with only wholesome effort or energy; everybody must fly at game beyond their reach, if only it be within their sight.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- L. G. B.—We can find no record of the name.
- J. A. M.—We cannot advertise them in this column.
- C. W. I.—Borax water and glycerine will sometimes cure pimples, and help to remove freckles.
- B. T. H.—It is not improbable that your wish will be gratified soon.
- C. H. L.—One thousand billions is the answer to your question.
- A. R. T.—1. We have no knowledge of the word. 2. There is no recipe that would aid you.
- B. M. O.—There is no book that is devoted to the subject referred to.
- N. B. C.—The coin named commands no premium at present.
- W. J. R.—We know of no recipe for the purpose required.
- R. T. C.—We know of no "position" that you could fill.
- C. R. D.—The Suez Canal, one hundred miles in length, connects Suez, on the Red Sea, with Port Said, on the Mediterranean.
- L. B. V.—Lunar caustic or acetic acid will remove warts. Any good chemist will instruct you how to use either.
- W. C. W.—Frederick von Flotow, the composer of *Martha*, and other operas, died at Wiesbaden, January 24, 1883.
- R. D. S.—Consult a lawyer on the subject of your grievances. You will have to employ one if you take any steps toward redressing the wrong done you.
- P. F.—Ralph Waldo Emerson is the author of the line you quote—
"He builded better than he knew."
- R. C. M.—1. You must act upon your own judgment. 2. We know of no one of the name mentioned who is connected with the "community."
- A. H. P.—Partake liberally of food containing the most starch and sugar, and indulge in only moderate outdoor exercise. If you smoke or chew tobacco, give up its use. Go to bed early, and be regular in all your habits. Follow this advice, and you will get stouter in time.
- R. S. L.—1. The Cyclops were giants with only one eye, and that in the middle of the forehead. 2. The first profile taken, as recorded, was that of Antigonos, who having but one eye, his likeness had to be so taken; but for years a Roman emperor was rarely taken with a full face. The artists thought that the profile gave the head a more majestic look.
- B. M. N.—Cuba has an area of 72,000 square miles; population in 1876, 1,414,503, half of whom are blacks, and enfranchised slaves. The island is governed by a captain-general, appointed by the Spanish Crown. Its great staple is sugar, of which 450,000 to 600,000 tons are annually exported.
- J. B. C. L.—"Penelope's web" is a work that never progresses. Penelope, the wife of Ulysses, being importuned by several suitors during her husband's long absence, made reply that she could not marry again, even if Ulysses were dead, until she had finished weaving a shroud for her aged father-in-law. Every night she pulled out what she had woven during the day, and thus the shroud made no progress towards completion.
- S. F. A.—There is no doubt that Vichy water is good for persons suffering from any disease of the kidneys, but those who drink it should do so in moderation. A small tumbler is enough for any Vichy water drinker to take at a time, if the water be genuine. We have read of persons being cured of ordinary kidney complaints by taking a third of a bottle of Vichy water before breakfast, and the remaining two-thirds at noon and at bed time—five or six bottles effecting a complete cure. Seltzer water is also recommended in similar cases, but is not as efficacious as Vichy.
- A. G. V.—To make currant jelly, take the first picking of well-ripened currants. Work and mash thoroughly with the hands. Strain the juice through a muslin bag, and then through a thick flannel bag, being careful not to squeeze it, as that takes from the brightness of the jelly. Measure it, setting down the number of pints of juice you have. Put it to boil. A porcelain scullery or saucepan is preferable, but do not let the juice more than half fill it. When it boils set the sugar, which must be of the very best white, in a pan on the stove (over a saucepan of boiling water is best). It must be in the proportion of one pint of the juice to one pound of sugar. Stir the sugar constantly, or it will stick to the bottom of the pan. When the juice has boiled twenty minutes add the warmed sugar. Let it bubble up once; take it right off; and you will be certain of bright, firm jelly. When the tumbler is filled, cover them with white paper. This should be done until the jelly is cold, and the paper should lie down on it. Paper dipped in the white of egg is nice to paste over the top; mice do not attack it. The juice of the raspberry mixed with the currant is considered a great improvement. About one-fourth part should be raspberry. The two fruits preserved together are very nice—one pound of the mixed fruits to an equal quantity of sugar. Cook until the syrup seems thick; carefully skim it when boiling.

C. I. M.—It is not in our power to oblige you.

A. G. M. F.—To wash silk pocket-handkerchiefs, &c., first use lukewarm water, soaping them as they are washed, and then rinse them in cold water, in which a little salt has been dissolved. Silk articles should always be washed by themselves.

Et. S.—1. The colour of the gloves worn by the bride's mother is optional with herself. 2. If you wear gloves to the refreshment table, it is not necessary to remove either of them. 3. The bride walks at the left side of the bridegroom. 4. She takes, of course, his arm.

C. W. P.—1. All the parties named are reputed to be very rich. We doubt if they themselves could tell whose estate is the largest. 2. Feb. 4, 1884, came on Monday. 3. Mars was the morning, and Jupiter the evening star. 4. The party named is, we believe, unmarried.

G. R. L.—1. If your company is agreeable to the lady, she will be very likely to ask you to call again. Under no circumstances a force yourself upon her. 2. There is nothing improper in asking a lady acquaintance to allow you to escort her home after church. 3. The lock of hair is black. 4. Your height is above the average, but in weight you fall far below it. 5. If on intimate terms with a lady, a gentleman may with propriety accept an invitation to take tea at her house. 6. The members of the Rothschild family are supposed to be the richest people in the world. 7. Sunday, July 30, 1868.

B. M.—1. Bublirigan, a town in Ireland, eighteen miles north-east of Dublin, is the seat of thriving manufactures of cotton goods and hosiery. The cotton stockings made there are remarkable for the fineness of their texture. 2. Borax is generally used to remove dandruff from the head, but a better remedy is sulphur—half an ounce of sulphur to a pint of water. Put it into a bottle, and wash the head with it twice a week. 3. If we understand your question aright, you should cut the tonals from the opposite directions represented in the diagram.

M. L. B.—Louis Moreau Gottschalk, the great American pianist, died in Rio de Janeiro, on Dec. 18, 1869, aged forty. He was a native of New Orleans. His father was an Englishman of German-Jewish descent, and his mother was of French extraction. Although a composer, his published works exceeding fifty in number, he was only celebrated as a pianist. He gave evidences of remarkable musical taste at three years of age, and at six took lessons on both the piano and violin. At twelve he was sent to Paris, where he entered upon a thorough musical education.

"TOO BRIGHT TO LAST."

Perchance the warbling of a bird,
The perfume of a flower,
May waken in our memory
Some bygone happy hour.

A strain of music may recall
The long-forgotten past,
The hopes, the dreams of vanished years—
Too dear, too bright to last.

M. P.

F. W. G. 1.—The richest deposits of bone phosphates in America, if not in the world, are to be found in the vicinity of Charleston, South Carolina, near Ashley and Cooper Rivers. These deposits underlie many square miles of surface continuously, at a depth ranging from six inches to twelve feet, and exist in such quantities that from 500 to 1,000 tons underlie each acre. A very large capital is invested in the business of converting the phosphates into forms available to agriculturists. The fertilizing properties of the phosphates are said to be unexcelled. 2. Your specimens were duly received.

S. C. B.—1. We know of no mirror of the kind you describe that would fulfil your expectations. 2. A vanilla flavouring for liquors is made by slicing (one dram of vanilla into small pieces, infusing for twenty days in one pint of 95 per cent alcohol, and filtering. To make extract of vanilla, cut one ounce of the vanilla into small pieces and triturate with two ounces of sugar to a coarse powder; put it into a percolator, pour on it diluted alcohol until one pint is run through; then mix with one pint of syrup. To distil vanilla water, macerate one pound of the vanilla in coarse powder, and five pounds of salt in two and a-half gallons of water for twenty-four hours; then distil over rapidly one gallon. To make vanilla cream syrup, take of fluid extract of vanilla, one ounce; simple syrup, three pints; cream (or condensed milk), one pint. If desired it may be coloured with carmine.

P. C. A.—The Elgin marbles, a collection of ancient sculptures, were chiefly taken from the Parthenon at Athens, and are now in the British Museum. They derive their name from the Earl of Elgin, who, while employed diplomatically at Constantinople, obtained the permission of the Porte to take away from the ruins of ancient Athens "any stones that might appear interesting to him." With the aid of a corps of artists he succeeded in his undertaking, which though denounced at the time by Lord Byron and others as an act of vandalism, was afterwards greatly applauded. In the war of Greek independence the Parthenon suffered very serious damage, and had not Lord Elgin removed them, these masterpieces of antiquity would never have been brought within the reach of the lovers of art. The entire collection was sold to the British Government, in 1815, for £35,000. The actual outlay exceeded £50,000. In 1810 Lord Elgin published a defence of his pursuits in Greece. Though he rose to the rank of General in the army, most of his services to his country were of a diplomatic character. He died in Paris in 1841, aged seventy-five.

E. X. C.—A doubloon is a Spanish and Portuguese coin, of the value of a little over three pence. A silver ducat is about equal in value to four shillings; a gold ducat is twice that value. Florin is the name given to different coins of gold or silver in different countries, the silver florins varying from one-and-eightpence to two shillings. The English florin is one-tenth of a pound sterling.

W. W. K.—1. It will be time enough for you to think of marriage four or five years hence. By that time it is not improbable that some other young girl will have struck your fancy, and some other young fellow here. Very long engagements, as a rule, should not be encouraged. 2. Your composition and writing are only fair. You will have to study very hard to qualify yourself for the medical profession.

W. S. T.—You might call on the young lady and show her some attention, and be as agreeable as possible while with her. By taking your mother into your confidence, and letting her know just how you feel, she would doubtless be able to make such engagements for you as will render it necessary that you should forego the constant companionship of the young lady during her visit, which your lover has so kindly planned for you.

H. C.—"German paste" is used for feeding larks, mocking-birds and others, which, in their wild state, feed chiefly upon insects. It is made by heating into a smooth paste two pounds of pea-meal, half a pound of blanched sweet almonds, quarter pound of fresh butter or lard, five ounces of moist sugar, half drachm of hy saffron and three hard-boiled eggs. Sufficient water is used to give it the consistency required for granulating, by passing it through a colander. The granulated paste is then exposed to the air in a warm place until it becomes quite hard and dry. It requires considerable experience to prepare this properly.

R. N.—The yolk of an egg has in its middle a little, jelly-like speck or germ, from which the young bird is hatched. The yolk is so made that this germ is always uppermost, no matter in what position the egg lies, so that, when the hen is sitting, the germ is always nearest to the warmth. The yolk and the albumen (or white) furnish food to the bird while it is in the shell. At the larger end of the egg, between the skin and the shell, is a space filled with air for the young one to breathe.

B. Q.—1. Ophthalmia, or moon-blindness, in a horse is an obstinate disease to combat. It has been so called on account of some supposed influence of the moon, it occurring periodically, but that body cannot have anything to do with it. There are various causes assigned for this form of ophthalmia; among them dark and heated stables and the pungent gas escaping from them. It is also said to be in a high degree hereditary. The cloudiness with which the eye is affected is very singular in its nature. It will change in twenty-four hours from the thinnest film to the thickest opacity, and, as suddenly, the eye will nearly regain its perfect transparency, but only to lose it, and as rapidly, a second time. The services of a regular horse practitioner are almost indispensable in a case of moon-blindness. 2. Goethe, the most distinguished name in the modern literature of Germany, is pronounced as if spelled *Goh-ta*, with the accent on the first syllable. 3. We are unable to enlighten you.

V. W. R.—The art of arranging bouquets is quite simple. After collecting the flowers to be used on a tray, strip all the superfluous leaves from the stems, and place the flowers side by side so as to see the order in which they can be most attractively displayed. A very pretty hand-bouquet can be made by taking a small, straight stick, not over a quarter of an inch in diameter. Tie a string to the top of it, and begin by fastening on a few delicate flowers, or one large, handsome one, for the centre piece, winding the string about each stem as you add the flowers and leaves to the bouquet. Always place the flowers with the shortest stems at the very top, reserving all those with long stems for the base, and complete the bouquet with a fringe of finely cut foliage. Then cut all the stems evenly, wrap damp cotton about them, and cover the stems with a paper cut in pretty lace designs. In making bouquets from garden flowers, such as are most easy to procure, the flowers can be arranged flatly, and a background made from sprays of evergreens.

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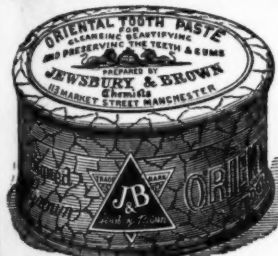
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